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ABSTRACT

This review of educational policy in Slovenia, carried out at the request of the Slovenian Government, has as its main focus an examination of the current state of the policy reforms set in motion following Slovenia's independence in 1991. It takes into consideration the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1996), the main principles and values of which are that the public education system: should be transparent and open; should be "legally neutral"; should provide the possibility of choice at all levels; should encourage democracy in decision making in the system; and should be a "quality" system emphasizing learning rather than the accumulation of facts. The review's analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are intended to indicate priorities within the evolving system rather than to suggest new or different directions. The report presents its findings on a thematic basis, highlighting the most important general principles of change which apply to all sectors. Chapter 1 summarizes the context in which the reforms are taking place. Chapter 2 deals with curriculum reform. Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with the development of outcome-related standards and quality in the system. Chapter 5 covers the new approaches to the locus and methods of decision making in the system. Chapter 6 addresses issues on efficiency and resources in the educational system. Chapter 7 presents recommendations and makes some general observations on the process of reform. (BT)

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INTRODUCTION

This review of educational policy in Slovenia, carried out at the request of the Slovenian Government, has as its main focus an examination of the current state of the policy reforms set in hand following Slovenia's independence in 1991. The reforms were sweeping and fundamental, as they had to be given the political, economic and social changes which accompanied the move to independence. They can be seen as encompassing three broad streams of activity:

- Creating the legislative basis for the changes (1990-96): since the beginning of the decade seven basic education acts have been put before the Slovenian Parliament covering the organisation and financing of education, pre-school education, elementary schools, *gymnasia* (secondary schools), vocational education and training, adult education, and higher education.

- Developing the curriculum and assessment systems (1995-2000): the establishment of a National Curriculum Council (NCC) in 1995 was a sign of the determination to renew the curriculum framework at all levels of education with an emphasis on active participation of students at school, flexible thinking and interpersonal skills. The assessment and evaluation systems were also to be changed radically, aiming at measuring the outcomes and improving the quality of the educational process;

- Improving the effectiveness and transparency of the system (1999 onwards): this phase has its roots in the two previous ones, and is likely to include such elements as a national evaluation relating to both outcomes and processes; and an information system providing people with more accurate and up-to-date information about the outcomes and resources of the system, thereby increasing transparency.

These stages are of course not self-contained, and elements of all are being pursued in line with the blueprint of reform, the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1996). Rather unusually, this document set out not only the broad lines of policy which had to be translated into action, but also the philosophy and values underpinning the whole reform process. Simplifying the arguments of the White Paper, the main principles and values are:

- the public education system should be transparent and open;

- it should be "legally neutral", in the sense that it should nor adopt any particular ideology which might be unacceptable to sections of the population;

- it should provide the possibility of choice at all levels;

- it should encourage democracy in decision-making in the system; and

- it should be a "quality" system emphasising learning rather than the accumulation of facts.

The review team has tried to take full account of these principles in its consideration of the Slovenian education system. It has also been fully aware that many of the strands of reform are at an early stage. The process is a long way from full implementation and much of the detailed policy development is as yet incomplete. The review team's analysis and its conclusions and recommendations are therefore intended to indicate priorities within the evolving system rather than to suggest new or different directions.

The review team is in any case clear that the Slovenian educational reforms represent a most impressive national achievement. Many OECD countries are currently reforming their educational systems, but few if any have had to make such radical changes against such a background of other changes in society. That Slovenia has been able to carry forward such proposals, founded on a clear basis of philosophy and with a high degree of consultation, is in the review team's view highly creditable.

In view of the comprehensive nature of the reforms, covering all sectors of the educational system, the review chose to present its report on a thematic basis, highlighting the general principles of change which it feels most important and which apply to all sectors. Chapter 1 summarises the context in which the reforms are taking place, in particular the industrial and labour market situations. Chapter 2 deals with curriculum reform, a particularly significant aspect given the desire to change completely from the previous socialist approach which was regarded as outdated and ineffective. Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with the development of outcome related standards and quality in the system, areas which both the review team and the Slovenian Government regard as extremely important. Chapter 5 covers the new approaches to the locus and methods of decision-making in the system, including the need for regionalisation, in contrast to the previous system. Chapter 6 takes up some issues on efficiency and resources in the educational system, and Chapter 7 presents the review team's key recommendations -- earlier chapters each contain recommendations relating to the discussion therein -- and makes some general observations on the process of reform.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT

This chapter deals with the context of educational reform in Slovenia. It covers the general economic situation, labour market developments, and the prospective impact of accession to the European Union (EU). It draws out some general conclusions for the education system, which are developed in following chapters.

Economic restructuring since 1991

At the beginning of its existence as an independent nation in 1990, Slovenia was in a relatively strong position. It had been the most prosperous part of the former Yugoslavia, with close links to other countries, including Germany, Austria and Italy. It was nonetheless clear that substantial change would be necessary in many areas, including the legal and governmental systems and, particularly important from the point of view of education and training, industrial structure and the labour market.

Like many other transition economies, Slovenia had a number of large state enterprises in the manufacturing sector. They effectively had captive markets in the rest of Yugoslavia and other parts of the Communist bloc; they employed large numbers, but with low productivity and efficiency; and they were completely unprofitable by the standards of a market economy.

The Slovenian authorities moved quickly to begin the restructuring through a process of privatisation. This did not proceed as quickly as some outside commentators would have wished but its effect, combined with the necessary macroeconomic stabilisation policy, was very marked. Output in these large enterprises fell sharply and so did employment. Those losing their jobs tended to be older than average and, since many of the enterprises were engaged in relatively old-fashioned metalworking activities, the workers did not have up-to-date and transferable skills.

Gross domestic product (GDP) fell substantially in the years following independence but since 1993 growth has been positive: latest estimates suggest an annual growth rate of between 3 and 4 per cent for the past three years. Industrial production has been much more sluggish. This may be partly due to a relatively low level of investment in industry and manufacturing compared with transport and communication where investment growth has been concentrated.

One consequence of restructuring was a very large increase in the number of small firms and self-employed people. The number of enterprises increased from about 4 000 in 1989 to 33 600 in 1995, with the vast majority of them employing fewer than 250 each. There were about 50 000 self-employed craftsmen with on average one additional employee each. Liberalisation also meant a large number of new businesses created in the private sector. Most of these new businesses were very small, and there was and still is a high "death rate" among them.

The general conclusion on the economy is that, while much has been done, there is still some way to go. Industrial restructuring is far from complete, and the industrial sector as a whole is still not strong: it is estimated that the sector as a whole is unprofitable. This must be a disincentive to investment, including direct foreign investment where Slovenia has done less well than some other transition economies. The structure of industry, with large enterprises facing further restructuring and probable job loss and many very small firms newly created, poses very major challenges for the education and training system.

The labour market

Employment fell in the immediate post-independence period, not surprisingly in the light of the trend of output and restructuring, but it has increased since 1993 and the employment/population ratio is high relative to most other transition countries. The number of part-time workers is very small, though temporary employment has been increasing, to about 9 per cent of total employees in 1996. Self-employment has hardly changed over the past five years though non-agricultural self-employment has almost doubled, reflecting the new enterprise creation referred to above.

The structure of employment by industry in Slovenia is rather different from most OECD countries. Industrial employment has a higher share of total employment and services a lower share than other countries. This will no doubt change as restructuring proceeds. It is also likely that the share of agriculture will decline from its current level of about 12 per cent, including self-employed.

Labour force participation in Slovenia has been high and was not much affected by the transition except for those under 25 where the rate has fallen by one-third. This may be partly due to higher numbers staying on in education. The other area which is notable is the low participation rate for men over 50, at about 46-47 per cent. The rate has not changed much since before independence, and seems to be the outcome of the retirement regime and worker attitudes to retirement. There is an almost universal tendency for people to retire before the age of 60, and the median age of retirement is 53 for women and 57 for men. This seems to be a result of several special factors. Many older people retire with disability pensions; large numbers of people do not satisfy the qualifying conditions for the statutory retirement ages (60 for women and 65 for men); and people can buy extra rights which reduce their pension age. Discussions on pensions reform are now under way.

An important point here is the trend of population in Slovenia. The population has stabilised at around 2 million, but more significant is the fact that the birth rate has been falling sharply. Live births per thousand population have fallen from 12.9 per cent in 1987 to 9.8 per cent in 1994. The implications of this for the education system can already be seen from declining numbers entering primary schools and a smaller total of primary pupils -- the total in 1995/96 was about 9 per cent less than in 1988/89 -- and the decline will accelerate as the falling birth rate works its way through. More generally, Slovenia looks set to have an increasing proportion of over 60 year olds,

most of them not in productive employment, and a declining proportion of under 25 year olds, with a sharply increasing dependency ratio.

Unemployment in Slovenia is measured both through a labour force survey (LFS) and through the registration of unemployed people with the National Employment Service (NES). As in other countries these two measures give different estimates of unemployment. Registered unemployment has been running at about 14 per cent for several years, whereas the LFS rate has been drifting down to a rate between 7 and 8 per cent in 1997. The reasons for the differences, again as in other countries, are the existence of "discouraged workers" who are registered but who are not in fact looking for work. In addition it is thought that Slovenia has a quite sizeable black economy, especially in construction and, no doubt, among the self-employed and very small firms.

By the LFS measure, Slovenia's unemployment rate is relatively good, broadly in line with the OECD average and well below several of the large EU countries. Male and female unemployment rates are much the same, but like many other countries the position of young people under 24 is much less satisfactory. In 1997 unemployment among both men and women aged 15 to 24 was about 18 per cent. For the age group 50 to 64 by contrast the unemployment rate was about 6 per cent, no doubt reflecting the tendency to early retirement, though many discouraged workers will be in this age group. In response to the problem of youth unemployment the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), jointly with the Ministry of Labour, has introduced a programme to deal with 5 000-6 000 young people.

Three other aspects of unemployment are of particular significance. Firstly, by both measures long-term unemployment is high, at around 60 per cent of the total, and NES data suggest increasing very long-term unemployment, of over two or three years. Secondly, those with poor educational attainments tend to be over-represented in the unemployed. This again is a finding common to most industrialised countries. Thirdly, notwithstanding Slovenia's small size, there are substantial differences between regions. The Maribor region, which had some of the large state enterprises before independence, has over one quarter of registered unemployment, a higher proportion than Ljubljana which is over twice the size. In general, the regions in the east of the country have the highest rates of unemployment.

Accession to the European Union

Negotiations on Slovenia's entry to the European Union have already began and Slovenia seems likely to meet the economic criteria for EU membership, with a positive trend in economic growth since 1993. In addition to the economic considerations, Slovenia is required to harmonise progressively a wide range of legislation at national level based on a battery of EU directives and regulations. In the reforms to date, significant effort has been made to accommodate this range of legislation.

More specifically for education and training, legislation for the mutual recognition of qualifications in designated professions is virtually in place. This will allow for greater mobility of Slovenian workers and students within the wider European Union as well as allowing access for workers and students from other EU countries to work, study and train in Slovenia for specific professions.

More generally, closer co-operation between the Slovenian administration and employers' organisations and their counterparts in border areas (particularly EU Member States and future

Members -- Austria, Italy and Hungary) will be required to ensure that access to education, training and employment on border zones is enhanced; This will have significant implications for standards and quality issues for education and training, and cross-border recognition of education and training qualifications.

With reference to Slovenia's participation in EU programmes, substantial progress has been made by the Slovenian authorities in their preparations to participate actively in the EU programmes in education and training. Final approval by the Association Council between the EU and Slovenia, expected in the first half of 1999, will allow the Slovenian administration, universities, schools and training centres, including the training departments of businesses and industry, to join in training activities (LEONARDO Programme) and co-operation in higher education (SOCRATES Programme). Participation in EU programmes will further openness in the Slovenian education and training sector, while co-operation with its European partners will continue to foster further reform and innovation.

With a population of 2 million, Slovenia is one of the smallest of the 26 existing and potential EU Member states. In many ways the country is well positioned for entry. It has a very open economy with exports amounting to about two-thirds of GDP with strong export links already with EU countries, and its small size could be an asset. With output only about 0.3 per cent of that of the EU, a relatively small increase in EU demand for Slovenia's exports could have a major effect on domestic GDP. Slovenia may also gain from the very similar structure of production between its economy and that of the EU, and the relatively similar export patterns.

Of course accession will mean great challenges for the Slovenian economy. The similarity of production and export structures will mean good market opportunities for existing EU producers in the more accessible Slovenian economy. Both the Government and the people of Slovenia are well aware that to compete in the EU will require even greater internal flexibility, further progress in restructuring, and liberalisation of capital flows. Slovenia's desire to participate in the Economic and Monetary Union at the earliest opportunity makes this all the more important.

The screening exercise with the European Commission is now complete and no major problems are foreseen in education. But EU membership and structural changes within the country will nevertheless have important implications for the education and training system. First, there will be an acceleration of the shift from manufacturing to service industries, with consequent changes in the demand for skills from those leaving full-time education. Enterprise restructuring will need to be speeded up if the country is to take a competitive position in European and global markets. Both industry and the administration must be ready to react to ensure that workers facing redundancy, unemployment or new orientations in the workplace can be trained or retrained. This will be particularly important for regional black-spots and to guard against long-term unemployment and all its manifestations of economic and social exclusion. The requirement for retraining and perhaps adult education to provide the basis for the acquisition of new skills will be substantial, and must take full account of the needs of the large number of new small firms. Further changes are bound to occur in the agricultural sector. Reforms in this sector to conform with the EU Common Agricultural Policy could have implications for the already changing rural economy. Given the political significance of this sector, both the education and training authorities will need to address the human resource implications of agricultural reforms in a coherent and strategic way.

More generally, the need for industry and commerce to become more competitive in the enlarged EU will require both a widening and a deepening of the skill base within Slovenia so that

new industrial developments are not frustrated by shortages of appropriately educated and skilled labour. New skills will certainly be required -- skills particularly for new technology and the information society to complement a highly advanced infrastructure in new technology which equals that of its EU neighbours. This is made more important by the static labour force and the prospective fall in the numbers entering the labour force from full-time education over the next ten years. The need for greater adjustment capacity within the labour force is therefore all the greater.

Finally, institutional changes will be needed to provide the structures and framework within which effective policies can be delivered. This is in part necessary to accommodate EU structural policies, and to plan and implement EU policies which have been reinforced in the Amsterdam Treaty, including the priority areas supported by the European Social Fund. But quite apart from EU requirements, change would be required. It will be necessary to invest in education and training institutions, to reinforce them and equip them for the task ahead. Employer involvement, a key element in delivery of policy given the economic context of change, must be positively fostered; and Government itself must ensure that there are adequate links between ministries, a coherent set of national goals, and appropriate structures and administration capacities to meet the requirements of the future.

Conclusion

The context of change in Slovenia underlines the importance of the educational reforms of the past four years. But the next five or ten years will bring very substantial challenges in the run-up to EU accession and beyond. Domestic considerations, including increased industrial restructuring, possibly higher unemployment and the falling birth-rate plus the competitive pressures of EU entry, will all have very important implications for the internal structure and functioning of the education and training system.

Above all, the reforms must yield a system which is flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. This is an aim of all countries, but it is even more important in a country like Slovenia which has seen such radical change over the past few years and which faces more in the near future. There are several elements to creating such a flexible system which may be summarised here, and which are dealt with in the following chapters. Firstly, the school system must educate students to understand the need for change, and to prepare them so that they are able to undertake learning later in life, after leaving the compulsory education system. This should be an aim of the curriculum and school reforms.

Secondly, an effective system of acquiring vocational skills and knowledge at different stages throughout life is essential. It is possibly more important for Slovenia, given its context of change, than in other countries. This means clear vocational education routes in the school system, with progression through ability to post-compulsory educational opportunities. Just as important is the need for adult education and retraining. This has become very clear in Slovenia with the decline and job loss in the former state enterprises and the relatively abrupt transition to a market economy.

Thirdly, reform of the education and training system is a national priority, and as such must involve all stakeholders who have an interest, which effectively means all parts of society. The system must also be such as to seem relevant, accessible and transparent to those involved, which implies a standards based system which is decentralised and close to the ground. The closer relevant

decisions are taken to those affected, the more likely they are to become involved and participated in decision-making and implementation.

Finally, the system as a whole and institutions within it must be aware of the need to change and react quickly to different circumstances. Obviously, excessive reaction to change would be confusing and a recipe for chaos and instability. But equally, a failure to realise when changes in organisation, institutions or legislation are needed -- and rapid action to make such changes -- could be damaging to the establishment of the system which Slovenia is trying to create.

CHAPTER 2

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

This chapter discusses the issues and dilemmas related to the organisation of teaching and learning in the school and vocational education systems in Slovenia. It concentrates first on the issues of the curriculum by having a brief look at the existing situation, then identifies some issues for consideration, and discusses the curriculum changes currently in train.

Reforming the content of education in Slovenia

The common feature of education systems in the former Central and Eastern European countries was the belief in the accumulation of knowledge as a main source of progress of society rather than the use of knowledge in solving problems. The school curricula in Slovenia before independence therefore put great weight on the quantity of knowledge pupils had to master. The assumption was that quantity would lead to quality, but of course this did not happen and there was a lack of profundity and no real integration of knowledge within the curriculum. Not only was the conception of curriculum downshifted to catalogues of pieces of information and the expectations of the results to awareness of factual information, another characteristic of the socialist school curriculum was the political requirement for knowledge of such areas as self-management, Marxism and doctrinal interpretations of history, economics and philosophy. One result of this was inadequate attention to basic and core subjects: the proportion of time devoted to science and mathematics declined sharply between 1966 and 1983.

The transition from a centrally-administrated system to an open market economy has challenged the old ways of education and training as well as the principles of educational planning. Slovenia has moved relatively rapidly from the socialist curriculum tradition towards a more flexible organisation of education and training in schools and other educational establishments. This was no doubt helped by Slovenia's contacts before independence with Italy and Austria, its border countries, and ongoing knowledge of educational developments there. The reform of the curriculum content has two visible features. Firstly, the "neutrality" of the knowledge domains from ideological and political emphasis. This has particularly changed the content of such subjects as history, civics, and philosophy. Secondly, there has been a transition from emphasising the awareness of facts and isolated skills towards development of higher-order thinking skills and problem solving abilities. In

Slovenia this development in the field of education has been accompanied and affected by the simultaneous recognition of new ways of assessment of teaching and learning.

The White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia provides a solid basis for these and other reforms taking place in the sphere of education. As the Note by the Secretariat showed, the principles of the White Paper are founded on the values of democracy, autonomy, and equal opportunity, and these principles underpin the entire education policy. They should also guide the renewal of the curriculum in general and the content of teaching and learning in particular.

Primary education

The main structure and style of basic education was reformed by the Basic Education Act of 1996, which redesigned the curriculum and the syllabi to meet the needs of the changing society. The new curricula have more emphasis on learning and process orientation, and focus less on the content and more on developing cognitive and social skills during the formal education.

The Law on Basic Education extended primary education from eight years to nine years. The former school system was free from streaming, tracking or any other forms of ability grouping, while the new nine year primary school brings these arrangements into the structure of basic education, with streaming within the same class, and with ability groups in Years 8 and 9. One issue here is how to cater for pupils with special needs. Currently, pupils with difficulties in learning and keeping up with the average group receive individual support and guidance in order to stay as long as possible with their home class. However, the increasing differentiation may increase the number of pupils who find themselves in an inappropriate ability group. Thus while schools have until now had to identify and help the pupils with learning difficulties, from now on they also have to be able to find those pupils who are studying in the wrong ability group and provide these pupils with opportunities to move to a more challenging group.

The experience of some OECD countries shows that when flexibility increases and the number of opportunities that pupils have concerning their studies is widened, the nature and style of pupil guidance, career guidance, and other counselling activities have to be strengthened. This is recognised in Slovenia. Provision is made for pupils in Year 9 to move to a higher ability group within the school year on the basis of their marks, and the decision on which ability group pupils should enter, which is for the pupils themselves, is taken with advice from parents, teachers and the school counselling service. A high quality of school counselling is therefore very important.

This issue of early differentiation, which can bring more choice to pupils and parents, has been widely debated and discussed in many OECD countries. On the one hand, the relatively small population of Slovenia will mean a relatively small pool of potential entrants to advanced science and technology, and this might suggest a greater need for selecting in the early stage talented individuals for academic or technical strands. On the other hand, there may be fears of widening the intellectual gap between citizens if some fail or achieve poor results not because of innate inability but because they are trapped in the wrong stream. The review team suggests that the development of differentiated curriculum in the last two cycles of the new nine year primary education system should be carefully considered, to avoid the risk that schools will become polarised and so undermine equal opportunities in the secondary and tertiary levels.

What goes on in the classroom is strongly influenced, among other things, by the textbooks that are used by teachers. Even if the teachers have in principle full autonomy to choose the methods

they want to use in classrooms, the reality is that the style of textbooks, or simply the lack of appropriate ones, determine the styles of interaction and thus instruction in schools. In Slovenia the textbook markets have become more open with a much wider choice, and with financial support from the Ministry, and it is possible to publish and use different kinds of textbooks in teaching. However, the National Council of Education annually publishes the lists of the teaching materials that have been approved and thus subsidised by the State. Despite opening the textbook markets there is currently a lack of choice in many subjects, especially in civics and history, economics, and environmental studies.

The review team observed several serious and well designed attempts to modify the curricula of primary and secondary schools to better meet the expectations of the new society and economic environment. Teachers in the general education schools were deeply involved in reviewing and commenting on the proposals of the NCC for new Framework Curricula. The NCC and the individual subject commissions collected feedback in two different ways: individual opinions from each willing teacher, and feedback from what may be called "teacher circles" in schools or municipalities. This democratisation of the educational governance and decision making is desirable and praiseworthy but it does not inevitably lead to good results. One example of this is the mismatch of the interpretation of what is meant by higher cognitive skills in the curriculum context. The initial results that the NCC received from the teachers showed that the teachers thought that the National Framework curriculum had too strong an emphasis on the cognitive domain, while the NCC expert analysis was that the balance between the cognitive and social and affective domains was appropriate. A further round of discussions with teachers has reduced the scale of this problem, and the great majority of teachers consider that the curricular commissions have taken account of their views. The general lesson here is that in the decision making process, it has to be clear that everyone shares the understanding of the goals and the meaning of the key concepts.

General secondary education

General secondary education here refers to post-compulsory schooling that in Slovenia starts at the age of 15 and lasts for four years. The secondary school in Slovenia was characterised by vocational and technical orientation until the end of 1980s. Vocational education was long integrated with general education in order to support the early vocational and occupational interests of the youth. In 1981 career-oriented education was introduced in the secondary level that was aimed at educating pupils for labour market and for higher education at the same time. The *gymnasium* that prepared pupils for higher education was abolished, only to be reintroduced in 1989. The externally controlled national school leaving examination, *matura*, started in 1992 and was extended to all general secondary schools in Slovenia in 1995. This examination is taken by almost all *gymnasium* students at the end of their secondary education and it also serves as an entrance test for the faculties of higher education institutions. It is having an increasingly important role among students, teachers and parents. *Matura* examination has also moved the focus from technical and vocational subjects towards academic studies, such as languages and literature, social sciences, and philosophy. At present, the *gymnasium* offers approximately 20 per cent of educational work that is optional for the students while 80 per cent of courses is mandated by the curriculum and study programmes. Chapter 4 discusses the *matura* in more detail.

From the documents prepared by the NCC, and the review team's discussions with the staff, it is obvious that there is a clear vision that the existing Framework Curriculum should be modified, especially in reforming the content of the curricula documents. The NCC has also identified the

problems that the Slovenian education system is facing, or beginning to encounter, including that of overload. The planning of the educational programmes in secondary schools, and the methods of instruction in classrooms, is guided among other things by two official documents. The NCC has prepared the Framework Curriculum documents for each school subject, and the subject commissions of the national *Matura* Commission prepare the syllabi for general secondary schools. The Framework Curriculum documents indicate the content areas that should be taught in schools and what objectives should be achieved. The latter documents set out what is to be assessed in *matura*. These two documents provide the teachers with precise information of the content of teaching and the principles underlying what is expected to be learnt. However, without continuous co-ordination of the content and the role of the two documents, some confusion among teachers may appear when they consider what is to be taught and in what level of understanding is appropriate.

Another issue related to the development of the national level curriculum is the overall meaning or concept of curriculum. The move from the socialist curriculum tradition with its emphasis almost solely on content towards a much more open society curriculum system, which in turn respects individual freedom and the process of intellectual and social development and growth, may be more difficult and time consuming than expected. That is why it is important to make the necessary investment in educational research on curriculum, and to strengthen the co-operation in this field with other education systems and international education networks to help avoid some of the pitfalls that some other countries have had to go through on their way to a modern system. The NCC has already organised seminars with international experts in these areas.

One common belief during the past three decades has been that changing the curriculum will lead to new kind of teaching in the classrooms. But in order to change the teaching styles and adapt to active ways of learning, teachers need to be supported by more than just retraining, or reformulating the curriculum. Rethinking the process of curriculum development is needed, especially at the local level of education system. In the curriculum reform like the one taking place in Slovenia it is advisable to have a high priority on teachers' role in curriculum planning, follow-up of the actual change in school, and evaluation of student achievement in the units where the reform initiatives have been implemented. The Slovenian reforms have deeply involved the teachers through an elaborate consultation process, so that they can become aware of the need for change, and so that the reforms can avoid too abstract and impractical approaches with an emphasis instead on what is practical. Indeed the need to educate and involve the teachers was a fundamental part of the reforms.

Slovenia has taken several giant steps towards a more flexible and democratic education system. Some of the ongoing trends are in parallel with those in many OECD countries, for example emphasis on learning skills in teaching, increasing degree of freedom of choice for students concerning their studies, and focusing the standards of learning and teaching rather than determining the inputs of educational process. Nevertheless, several issues remain to be discussed when developing the education policy of Slovenia.

Firstly, teaching programmes are clearly overloaded and, the curriculum content is too extensive to provide teachers and students with necessary time for deeper learning and understanding. It can also be argued that the pupils have too much homework and thus too little time for their own activities, though in fact Slovenia is around the average of OECD countries for homework. The paradox of schooling lies in this dilemma: the more information there is available (for example through the Internet or other contemporary media) the less content should be chosen for what is to be taught in classrooms. The wisdom in curriculum development means finding the right balance

between the core content of teaching and skills expected to be learnt as a result of teaching, including the all important one of learning how to learn.

Secondly, many of the schools in Slovenia work in two shifts. About 4 per cent of primary school classes are organised in two shifts. This is mostly due to lack of appropriate school spaces. Two opposing trends are already apparent over the next five years, the increasing number of classes because of the new nine year primary school, and falling enrolment rates because of the low birth rate. The intention is to reduce two-shift working virtually to zero by 2002, partly as a result of demography and partly due to new legislation providing for new investment to modernise school buildings and equipment.

Finally, the concept of curriculum is not clear in the educational documents, in that it is sometimes been confused with syllabi, i.e. time allocations, names of courses, class schedules, and numbers of lessons. The concept of "curriculum" is important and should be nationally clarified and even defined. The characteristics of curriculum should be developed toward performance orientation rather than a catalogue of things that are to be taught.

Developing the curriculum

There are several bodies in the governance structure in Slovenia responsible for developing the curriculum. The Education Development Unit in the MoES is in charge of the overall curriculum development in the country. This Unit defines the policy aspects and co-ordinates the different sectors of education. As explained above, the NCC and its subject commissions are responsible for developing programmes, timetables and syllabuses. These are then adopted by the councils of experts, three in number dealing with general education, technical and vocational education and adult education. Other bodies are then invoived in the implementation of the changes and providing help to educational institutions. These include the National Education Institute which provides expertise and counselling for the fields of pre-school, primary and general education, and the Centre for Vocational Education in the field of professional education and training. The National Examination Centre is mainly responsible for the state-wide assessment of pupil achievement but it also prepares the *Matura Catalogi*, documents that guide the preparation of school curricula of those aiming at *matura* examination.

Are these kinds of organisational and administrative arrangements clearly defined and effective enough to support the change? One may argue that at least from teachers' point of view, it looks confusing. It also demonstrates how heavily the curriculum reform is managed from the top. What should be the role of the municipalities in curriculum development. Currently they can define up to 6 per cent of the curriculum if the school allows: is this sufficient? To what extent can schools decide what to teach in their classrooms? Which institution is their main contact point in the national level in curriculum issues? These questions must be considered when developing the map of educational administration of Slovenia to meet the needs of a more decentralised education system in the future and Chapters 5 and 6 discuss them in greater depth.

Ongoing efforts to restructure the curriculum at all levels of the education system in Slovenia show that there is a fundamental change in progress, a process which is very time consuming, and where it can be very difficult to achieve the outcomes that were originally expected. Any assessment of system-wide curriculum change distinguishes between the level of policy, legislation and planning (so called intended curriculum), and the level of implementation which leads

to -- at least in some degree -- intended change (attained curriculum). The two may not always match up.

A more general point is that, even if each education system has its own traditions to convey, values to respect, and guiding policies, there are several "universal" phenomena and characteristics in the change process and the lessons learnt elsewhere should be studied carefully. Notwithstanding the international contacts which have been undertaken, the review team gained the impression that in Slovenia the knowledge of curriculum change in other countries has not been sufficiently brought to bear on the ongoing reform. Although the MoES has sponsored over 40 research projects in the field of education over the past few years, only a limited number have been targeted to gain understanding of the national education change processes at the level of the school or the system as a whole. For example, little or no research has been initiated on school improvement or effectiveness issues so far. The review team feels that there should be a strategy for research on the change and reform process, and that this would help establish a long-term strategy and vision for further development of the education system.

Another indication of limitation of using existing knowledge of educational change was the unclear prioritisation of the teacher in-service training courses. Instead, there were extensive lists and catalogues of short and longer courses that teachers had proposed and which were then executed. This may be partly a matter of timing, since there is no doubt that training the teaching profession is regarded as very important. One particular issue yet to be resolved is how specialised teachers should be. Should they be trained in one subject or in two or three, which would greatly increase flexibility and facilitate redeployment which may be needed as the demographic changes affect the structure of the school population?

In some respects, however, there are positive steps in this area. A new institute for school principals opened in 1995 to provide training courses for all school masters. This has included modern elements from Canadian and British training programmes in it. Through this, the principals have opportunities to train for the new leadership that is required to manage the Slovenian schools of today. This type of provision could be further developed, and some type of long-term courses for head teachers and active school leaders might fill some of the gaps mentioned above. Staff development at all levels, but especially for head teachers, is a prerequisite in achieving the desired results in changing the curriculum, since it will help provide a shared understanding of what the change in school is all about. Many of the head teachers to whom the review team talked were well aware of this: their priorities were leadership and motivation of their staff.

Considerable efforts have already been made in the national level school reform in Slovenia. The new legislation establishes a solid foundation for the creation of a new culture inside the education system. Working on the national standards and respective external assessment systems will lead to a situation in which the educational planning bodies will receive more information more accurately about how the system is working. The introduction of the new nine year primary education will also bring more flexibility and choice into that level of education. Nevertheless, a number of issues remain concerning the educational changes:

- There should be coherence between the top-down and bottom-up approaches to change. In the present situation the teachers do not have enough opportunities to participate in the detailed planning of curriculum change because of heavy teaching and administrative load.

- There is too little research on the ongoing change in schools and classrooms. The situation could be improved by establishing and agreeing on a national educational research policy that would be partly financed by the State and where EU help might be forthcoming.

- It is far easier to articulate the desired change in writing and redesign the political principles of education than it is to realise expected changes in the classroom behaviour of teachers and their pupils. This is particularly true with changing the curriculum. The issue here is that the progress of change should not be judged only by looking at the curriculum documentation but must assess how far from the starting point have the values, beliefs, and practices changed. In brief, changing the curriculum does not necessarily represent the solution to the educational problems.

Vocational education

Many of the above points are relevant to vocational education as well as to the general school system, but there are particular issues in the reform of vocational education which warrant separate discussion. The school system which operated up until 1991 was intended to be "career-oriented", with secondary schools being given the task of preparing pupils for certain occupations. Most of the curriculum in secondary school was therefore specifically geared to the provision of skills. The outcome is generally believed to have been a complete failure. Not only did this approach to secondary schooling affect adversely general education because of the concentration of the curriculum on vocational issues, it did not succeed in meeting its objective of providing pupils with up-to-date skills more relevant to industry.

This outcome, and the changes in employment patterns following independence and the collapse of the large state enterprises, meant that reform of vocational education was essential. Following the White Paper, legislation was passed in 1996 to reform the system of vocational education, so that this area of the education system is at a relatively early stage of reform. The legislation provided for new structures of vocational education, including technical *gymnasia* -- secondary schools of a standard similar to *gymnasia* in general but with a strong technical or professional orientation -- and post-secondary professional colleges. An important development is the establishment, at the moment on a pilot basis, of a "dual system", whereby school pupils are offered the opportunity of industrial experience or practice running alongside their school studies.

Establishing new curricula for vocational education is proceeding in a pragmatic way, under the leadership of the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, and the VET Curriculum Commission. But curriculum development is in some ways more complex than for general secondary education because of the objectives involved, namely effecting an improvement in the links between education and the labour market and facilitating the transition from school to work. Involvement of the social partners, especially employers at all levels, in curriculum development is therefore vital, and while they play their part in the various institutions, there is a great deal still to do in the implementation of the vocational education reforms to ensure that they work effectively. This is as much on the side of the employers, as in the education system.

The vocational education law established multiple tracks for individuals and options for initial vocational preparation. Formal apprenticeships are one part of the mix of options for students. It has been a prudent decision not to assume that the formal apprenticeship model can become the

central delivery system for a significant portion of students. The multiple track options for students for vocational preparation, while placing a higher fiscal burden on the public sector, appears to be a judicious approach for the country. There are still several challenges ahead. One is to ensure that consideration is given to the links and complementarity between curriculum and training delivery in the vocational education system and the wider training environment within enterprises. Another, perhaps the main one, is to establish a broad-based framework regarding central tasks of each partner acceptable to both the public and private sectors, which can help identify the critical priorities for action, especially in curriculum development.

Among the areas of action where there is an interdependence between the public and private sector are:

- identifying the skills, knowledge and attributes needed in the workplace;
- assisting in the integration of work and learning by reviewing curriculum to be used in the classroom and taking the lead to develop work-based learning materials;
- identifying support services needed to promote work-linked activities, including providing professional development opportunities for education and training provider staffs;
- participating in the development and provision of meaningful work experiences;
- matching young people and job seekers to appropriate work; and
- assisting in the development and utilisation of work-focused assessment instruments and credentials.

Employers may need assistance within their own firms to deliver on their "end of the bargain" on dual system practice opportunities or the development of vocational curricula more generally in several of the tasks identified above. For example:

- designing a work-based learning opportunity within their own work sites;
- changing, if necessary, human resource development practices (*e.g.* using skill standards for recruitment and training activities);
- selecting the right education partner(s) to work with;
- selecting and training workplace mentors; and
- calculating the return on investment.

The review team see a need for "capacity building" in this whole area. This is partly a matter of providing resources to support employer networks to assist in the development of the mutual tasks and to provide the direct support to employers. But there are many other partners who similarly will have to develop new or enhanced capabilities. Trade unions cannot currently play the part they should, and the Chambers of Commerce and of Crafts will need greater capacity to fulfil their role, which may in many cases be to give a lead to the MoES. Even within Government, the capacity and the necessary links and joint working will need augmentation. This will involve

resources but without such resources the necessary infrastructure will not be built and the vocational education system, or some parts of it, may be at risk. Later chapters resume discussion of this point.

The Slovenian authorities are aware of these issues, and in particular the importance of linking the vocational education curriculum with the requirements of the future labour market, together with the need to avoid curricula which are too specific and lock a person in to a particular occupation. In this regard, the curriculum development of vocational education is benefiting from a major input from the EC/Phare programme. Pilot schools have been selected to produce detailed proposals for reform, with training for school staff both in developing new curricula and in working with them once approved, and it is important that the Ministry ensure that the experience gained in the pilots is translated into action at the national level as appropriate. International experience is being drawn on where lessons can be learned from other countries.

Higher education

Taking into account the increased educational aspirations of the population and the aim to raise the proportion of the labour force holding a degree, the Higher Education Act provides the foundation for a diversification of higher education. At the undergraduate level faculties as in the past offer programmes leading to a university degree. In addition, they have introduced programmes leading to a degree of professional education. The latter may also be offered by professional tertiary institutions. Graduate degree programmes offered by faculties lead to specialist, master's or doctoral degrees. There are also non-degree courses which aim at improving, deepening or broadening the knowledge in specific fields. Study programmes may be organised as full and part-time courses.

As a consequence of the new degree structure, educational provision has changed considerably and programmes in new fields have been set up. In 1997 higher education institutions in Slovenia offered 131 university degrees and 53 professional degree programmes. On the graduate level there were 54 specialist and 115 masters' degree programmes.

Despite the expansion of post-secondary opportunities not all applicants can be accepted. Discrepancies between available places and students' demand differ considerably by discipline. Economics, business studies, law ("transition" disciplines) have the greatest excess demand. One way of handling the problem has been to increase part-time studies. Part-timers are no longer only older students combining studying and working, but are increasingly young students enrolling immediately after finishing secondary school. The expansion in part-time studies by "traditional" students may be acceptable as a short-term solution. There is, however, the threat that if it became a permanent instrument to cope with fluctuations in student demand, this could result in a lower status and quality of this type of courses, especially as part-time studies accept applicants with lower scores at school. Such a development is also questionable for equity reasons, as part-time students are fee-paying. To cope more satisfactorily with student fluctuations higher education institutions may take a more active role in promoting the Government's consideration of a credit system. Broader and interdisciplinary study programmes, too, may be attractive for students and a possibility to respond more flexibly to students' demand. However, a gradual reallocation of resources seems inevitable.

The flexibility of the higher education system to react to students' demand is limited. Extreme fluctuations may lead to unemployment in some fields and a lack of personnel in others. In this context guidance and counselling of students is important. The "Starting Points for the Master Plan" now under discussion in Parliament stresses the demand for more systematic information and

counselling for school-leavers. Both are imperative and are tasks for higher education institutions, too, especially in a situation when the changes in programmes are numerous and complex. The two-track system of traditional university degrees and other tertiary professional qualifications, has been implemented within a short period of time. Differences in profile between the academic and the professionally oriented programmes will only gradually emerge. The development of both tracks needs to be studied and monitored systematically.

There has therefore been a considerable expansion of higher education opportunities in recent years, with plans for further diversification. There are, however, broader issues in higher education to be considered, including the number of institutions, their governance and flexibility, and most importantly, their place in underpinning economic development. These are dealt with in later chapters.

Recommendations

The curriculum content in primary and secondary education should be reduced. The curriculum should be based on the knowledge, skills and values that are relevant to Slovenian society and all the educational stakeholders, not least the pupils, not just those which are important from the traditional academic point of view.

Curriculum development should build bridges between the different school subjects, particularly at primary level, with more inter-disciplinary and cross-curricular topics or themes in the Framework Curriculum in order to encourage schools to introduce such courses and activities.

It is recommended that a national strategy should provide the municipalities and school with ideas and approaches to combat the traditional teacher-centred methods of instruction and training, taking account of the understanding gained in the international community of school improvement.

The NCC has adopted the right approach by inviting all teachers in every school to discuss and comment on the Framework Curriculum documents and this should continue. It is also important to invite the teachers' union to participate to discuss the design of new curriculum with the authorities in charge.

Educational research should be an important provider of innovation in the system of education and should examine the effects of the reform process in schools and in the system. The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Science and Technology should create a clearer strategy for educational research in Slovenia which supports and backs up the national reform efforts in education, involving the Educational Research Institute and the University of Ljubljana.

The ongoing curriculum reform taking place in Slovenia, could be enhanced by having a shared understanding of what is meant by curriculum. This requires among other things the involvement of educational researchers, in-service training for head teachers, and emphasising teachers' role as curriculum planners.

In vocational education, development of curricula must be closely linked with labour market needs, and employers must be fully involved in the process of development with, where necessary, assistance to support employer networks.

CHAPTER 3

OUTCOME STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, CERTIFICATION AND QUALITY: I PRIMARY EDUCATION

This chapter deals with this important subject in primary education. The following chapter discusses secondary and vocational education, first in terms of the present situation on standards and assessment, and then the proposed reforms. The next chapter covers the same ground in secondary and post-secondary education.

Standards: No explicit standards framework exists for the outcomes of Slovenian primary education, although the external assessment of knowledge in the Slovene language and mathematics, as introduced in 1991/1992 for eighth graders, may function as a focus for the implemented curriculum in these two subjects at the end of primary education. The information in the White Paper regarding the compulsory primary school syllabus mainly concerns the subjects that are to be taught and the number of hours to be spent on these. There is no mention of attainment targets that would serve as a point of departure for curriculum development and as a standard for assessment of student performance and monitoring of the national level of education. The present, informal, standards for the outcomes of education reflect a tradition that goes back to the time that Slovenia still belonged to the Socialist Federate Republic of Yugoslavia, and are, as the MoES acknowledges, learning-topic oriented, or emphasize "factology" rather than competence.

Assessment: For most subjects, student performance is assessed on a numerical scale, running from one to five. For some "educational" subjects like music, arts, physical education and home economics, a three-level grading scale (very successful, successful, less successful) is used. Each pupil's general achievement is determined at the end of the school year. Since 1992, performance in Slovene and mathematics is externally assessed at the end of grade eight. These test are not obligatory, and the results do not influence the grades that students receive at the completion of primary education. They are, however, decisive if a student wants to enrol in a secondary school with limited admission.

Indicators: The White Paper mentions a range of statistics on system and input indicators, such as the starting age and length of compulsory education, the number and distribution of school days per year, the number and length of periods, pupil's daily, weekly and annual attendance requirements, the guaranteed compulsory education programme in terms of activities (classroom, field, extra-curricular, and remedial), and subjects and instructional time allotted to these. Lack of

explicit outcome standards, however, makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate the functioning of the educational system with respect to student outcomes. Individual schools may use the results of contests which take place in schools all over the country. During one of the visits, the administration of a national reading survey, conducted by the National Educational Institute was mentioned. The results of the external tests for Slovene language and mathematics at the end of grade eight could probably also be used to obtain some idea of educational achievement at the national level. However, neither written nor oral reports on the last two issues were obtained during the mission. In the past, the school inspectorate used to collect data for process evaluation by making school visits and classroom observations. As this activity was viewed as controlling rather than encouraging, this function was taken away from it at the end of the eighties. The inspectorate seems to have less of a role in the evaluation of the quality of education as in ensuring the functioning of educational institutions according to the law and the protection of legal rights of consumers.

In February 1996, the Slovenian Parliament adopted a framework for restructuring the system of education, consisting of six acts, regulating the organisation, funding and programmes of all types of pre-school, primary and secondary education in Slovenia. The consequences of the Primary Education Act for outcome standards, assessment, certification and quality are summarised below.

Standards: One of the key strategies in the educational reform is to move away from a curriculum focusing on teaching facts and rote learning of isolated knowledge towards a more applied, skills-oriented (process-objective) one, based on standards that would make Slovene education internationally comparable and competitive. The White Paper mentions twelve very general and broadly formulated goals. These should be elaborated into new curricula, the development of which is co-ordinated by the NCC. Drafting of sets of attainment targets with explicit criteria for teaching and assessment, to be discussed by the Parliament for adoption in the legal framework, is not envisaged.

Assessment: The new legislation introduces nine years of basic education, organised in three cycles of three years each. For the first of these cycles, descriptive grading will be used. This system of grading has already been introduced on an experimental basis in the first grades of a number of primary schools. According to the White Paper, grading should be based on national standards, formulated for well-defined subject areas (e.g. mathematics: the notion of numbers, measurements, arithmetic, geometrical concepts, logical mathematical constructs). At the end of the first cycle, there will be national tests in the mother tongue and mathematics. These tests are most likely to be produced by the National Examination Centre. The administration and grading will be done by the schools according to set procedures. Results will be used as feed back for schools, parents and pupils, but will not influence grades nor passing to the second cycle.

In the second cycle, a mixture of descriptive and numerical grading will be used. Again, at the end of this cycle, there will be national tests in the mother tongue, mathematics and also a foreign language, to be administered and graded by the schools. The results of this assessment will help the differentiation of pupils in the third cycle and the evaluation of the quality of schools. They should not, however, influence grades or the transition to the third cycle of individual students. In the third cycle, teachers will assess students' performance on a numerical scale only. At the end of the third cycle, external tests will be administered for mother tongue, maths, a foreign language, a science and a social science subject. Students will receive report cards with grades in individual subjects and an overall achievement grade. For some subjects (Slovene language, maths, foreign language) an indicator of level (A,B,C) will be added. This will be the case for those subjects that are taught on

three different levels in classes eight and nine (Slovene language, maths, foreign language). The grades will be the unweighted average of the results of the external tests and grades given by teachers.

Indicators for monitoring and system evaluation: In contrast to the extensive descriptions of how assessment of student performance should fulfil the function of guiding pupils through the system of compulsory education, there is virtually no mention of developing means to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the planned changes by measuring students' results against the standards that are pursued in the new curricula. The Minister of Education and Sport has assigned the development of a plan for monitoring the gradual introduction of the nine year primary school programme to the National Education Institute.

The lack of explicit outcome standards is a threat to the changes in primary education. While the NCC is doing an invaluable job in getting a considerable part of the Slovene educational community involved in the gradual implementation of the curricular changes by running and co-ordinating Curricular Commissions (CC) and teachers' circles, there is a too wide a gap between the outcome standards in the remits and guiding documents for the CC's and the documents that will eventually be produced by these. This might result in lack of coherence across curricula and impede the shift towards application and skills. During the review team's meeting with the NCC, it was confirmed that the first proposals from CC's showed too much emphasis on the cognitive side, were rather prescriptive and overburdened with content. Consideration should be given to developing attainment targets for cross-curricular skills to define the outcomes of compulsory education in a more precise way. The developments of such targets would be complex, but they would be important for monitoring and evaluation of the curricula proposed by the NCC.

Chapter 2 discussed the importance of not overburdening the curriculum. In combination with the much stricter rules for advancing through the system and the emphasis on higher order skills, there is a serious risk that successful completion of primary education will be within the reach of a lesser percentage of students than it is now. Until now, these concerns have led to the decision that the subject matter of the proposed curricula should be reduced, but the issue is not only the number of topics, but also the nature or level of study. The national curriculum emerging from the reform is regarded as both a minimum set of knowledge and skills that may be mastered by a vast majority of students, and a minimum required to qualify for secondary studies. This is of importance for the intended introduction of levels in grades eight and nine.

The introduction of descriptive grading in lower grades of primary education is meeting wide support. It is felt that it stimulates pupils more than numerical grading and that it informs parents better. It would be better suited to assess the results of integrated teaching and in this way also stimulate teacher co-operation and contribute to changing the style of teaching towards one of tutoring rather than lecturing. At the same time, there is the risk of abandoning long-accepted and practised standards, based on a numerical approach, without replacing them with new ones that tell teachers, pupils and parents whether the results of teaching and learning meet a certain desired level. In similar cases elsewhere, initial enthusiasm has disappeared once it has become clear that the expected positive effects of a new way of grading have been outweighed by the loss of information about standards. It would be highly desirable to have assessment instruments that would help teachers to check on a regular basis whether the results of their teaching meet certain standards. These instruments should be developed centrally and be "curriculum-free", i.e. they should measure the knowledge and skills that belong to the core of the national curriculum, and should be taught independently of the specific textbook or didactic approach used. In its most sophisticated form,

these instruments could take the shape of a pupil monitoring system, tracking the results of individual students while they proceed through the system, and setting them against national standards.

The new value placed on *competence and core skills* will need to be reflected in forms of assessment that measure these attributes, in addition to (but not instead of) traditional knowledge-based forms. This in turn means that pencil-and-paper forms of testing will need to be supplemented with alternative forms, such as oral, practical, and extended project work, co-operative learning, portfolios, exhibitions, performances, etc. Some of these forms -- such as oral testing -- have a long and solid tradition in Slovenia; others -- such as project work, group work, and practicals -- will need careful preparation, in terms of setting standards and especially of training teachers in these new approaches to assessment and the application of these standards consistently and reliably.

The introduction of levels in grades eight and nine will add an extra dimension to the already difficult development of national standards. What will be the ratio for distinguishing these levels in these subjects? On the assessment side, the problems are not over once this ratio has been determined. It may not be difficult to formulate standards on different levels of mastery or difficulty ("The student has some understanding of ..." vs. "The student has a deep understanding of ...", or "The student can with some help carry out an experiment ..." vs. "The student can carry out independently..."). However, experience shows that operationalising such phrasings in tests on different levels is quite a difficult task, and may lead to assessment assignments that do not differ in difficulty, or actually point in the wrong direction. It is suggested that a clear and functional ratio is given for distinguishing levels in higher grades of primary education. Assessment instruments should be developed in such a way that it is possible to verify whether the intended difference between various levels has been correctly operationalized. Making use of calibrated item banks or overlapping tests may serve this purpose.

During some visits the use of the end of primary education tests as the sole mechanism for selecting students for more prestigious schools was questioned. It was felt that this would influence teaching in primary schools in a undesirable way, while the predictive validity of the test would be low. In one school, use of interviews was advocated. The mechanism for selecting students for more prestigious *gymnasia* should be revised. Additional use of other indicators for determining the aptitude and predicting success should be considered.

Planning monitoring and evaluation is lagging behind the implementation of the changes, which is a reason for some concern. There are many aspects to a master plan for monitoring and evaluation, all of which can not be handled by the body that has been entrusted with this task, i.e. the National Education Institute (NEI). One issue the NEI acknowledged as being beyond their expertise was a cost-benefits analysis of the reform. Another issue that they had not considered yet is monitoring and evaluating the reform by measuring students' outcomes. The national tests that are envisaged to be administered at the end of the three cycles will not be fully suitable to serve this purpose. The administration will not be done under standardized conditions (first and second cycle) and the purpose of these tests will be different, i.e. to evaluate and guide individual students (second and third cycle), which will affect the validity of the test with respect to national monitoring purposes. The review team would suggest that a facility be created to produce instruments for the national assessment of educational performance, which clearly relates intended, implemented and achieved curriculum and links results to relevant background variables (social-economic background, region, gender, etc.).

Apart from monitoring on the input and the output side, evaluation on the process side of the curricular form should take place as a reform of quality assurance for the system. Intensive and carefully planned classroom visits are indispensable in this respect. Current methods of inspection are rather informal involving education experts rather than a formal inspectorate, dealing both with standards in the schools and with dropouts, which is a source of concern. While an informal system can operate efficiently and effectively, the review team tends to the view that this process should be located within an institution which would function independently of the Ministry, and that part of its role should be to counsel or assist where performance is not up to standard, so improving quality within the system. The institution should not be involved in implementing any changes directly so that it would not have an interest in a favourable evaluation. It is important to emphasise that such an inspectorate should not be seen as a move towards centralisation. On the contrary, in a decentralised system this kind of consistent approach to ensuring quality and measuring the effectiveness of education outcomes and processes is essential.

Recommendations

Outcome-oriented standards are required in primary education, including for cross-curricular skills, and the Curriculum Commissions should work towards documentation on this basis. These outcome standards should focus on core skills and competencies rather than on subject-specific knowledge.

Assessment instruments should be developed centrally which enable teachers to check on a regular basis whether the results of their teaching meet required standards.

Consideration should be given as to whether the mechanism for selecting students for more prestigious schools should give so much weight to primary education end-tests.

Programmes for teacher training should be developed and implemented to help teachers supplement traditional testing with alternative forms, setting standards, and apply these standards reliably.

The MoES should work towards instruments which provide an assessment of national educational performance.

The process of education should be evaluated and the role of an evaluating institution independent of the Ministry, which is important in achieving the necessary changes, should be clearly defined.

CHAPTER 4

OUTCOME STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, CERTIFICATION AND QUALITY: II SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Standards: The subjects and the number of hours taught in *gymnasia* are determined by the Ministry of Education and Sport, leaving some periods undetermined (1-3 in grades one to three, 11 in grade four). Schools should design their own syllabuses by allocating these undetermined periods. There are no centrally formulated attainment targets. Since 1993, this role is fulfilled by the *Matura Catalogi*. These are prepared by National Subject Commissions, supervised by the National *Matura* Commission, and are checked on compatibility with the existing curriculum by the National Education Institute. The *catalogi* include subject aims, assessment objectives, subject contents and other elements of an examination syllabus. The publication of the first *catalogi* showed the need of external checking mechanisms based on national standards, since they revealed gaps in what was being taught in many schools. The fact that some subject groups took the opportunity to rationalize the curriculum illustrates another advantage of explicit and transparent national standards together with a sound mechanism for revision, that they can foster innovation.

Assessment: Classroom assessment has been strongly influenced by the recently introduced *matura* exams, in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side were reported the increase in the quality of question setting by individual teachers, and the fact that teachers, working towards common goals as set by the *matura catalogi*, co-operate in assessment tasks. The shift towards more written tasks, taking away time from non-written activities, was seen as negative. All instruments for diagnostic and formative use, as well as summative tests for internal assessment, have to be produced by teachers themselves. There are no commercially available assessment instruments.

At the end of secondary education, almost all *gymnasia* students are entered for the external *matura* exam. In technical secondary schools about one third of the students take the *matura*, while two thirds take the internal and supposedly less demanding final exam. The new *matura*, conducted for the first time in 1995, is based on examinations which are set and marked externally. This was a radical departure from previous practice whereby school-based tests and a wide range of university faculty entrance examinations controlled access to higher education. The overall responsibility for the *matura*, the rules and procedures of administration, lie with the National *Matura* Commission, comprising representatives from the two universities, the Secondary School Association, the MoES, the National Council for General Education, the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts and National Subject Commissions. The exam papers and marking schemes are set by the National Subject

Commissions, which are also responsible for marking the students scripts. The National Examinations Centre, established in 1993, is responsible for printing and distributing papers, collecting and analysing results data and plays a central role in supporting the subject commissions and controlling the quality of question papers.

The *matura* exam consists of five subjects, three of which are compulsory (mother tongue, mathematics and a foreign language). The other two may be chosen from a list currently of some 30 subjects, including 11 technical and vocational. Some subjects require, apart from a written test, practical or project work, or an oral exam, mathematics and languages are examined at two levels. The alternative to the *matura*, the school-based final exam, consists of only two compulsory subjects: mother tongue and either mathematics or a foreign language. The elective part consists of one or two subjects typical for the discipline from which the student is graduating and a paper, a product or project work. The final examination is an internal examination, prepared by candidates' own teachers in schools. Direct comparison among candidates coming from different schools or even from different classes in the same school is not possible.

In order to obtain a *matura* certificate, a student must achieve a positive grade in all five subjects, or have sufficient compensation from other subjects in the case of a "near miss" in one. Entrance to university is determined by the total points score (exams taken on a higher level may add bonus points to the score). If there are more applicants than places, the *matura* score counts for 60 per cent and the results of the last two years in secondary education for 40 per cent in the selection. The final examination marks are also used as a selection criterion for entrance to higher professional schools.

It is felt that the changes of the last decade (abolition of the career-oriented system, re-introduction of general *gymnasium* education and re-introduction of the *matura*) have brought general secondary education in Slovenia "in accord with the fundamental goals of the programme and the tradition and manner of forming programmes of this kind in other European countries" (White Paper). In other words, no major structural changes are envisaged on the short-term. There is some concern, however, about compulsory versus elective content of individual subjects: for schools it is not alway clear what they should teach to all students, and what is only destined for students who take the subject as an elective and study it in more depth. The intended introduction of technical *gymnasia*, in which students are offered a *matura* exam "equal to the standard of the *matura* examination at the lower, ordinary level" (White Paper) suggests the development of examinations at two levels for all subjects. Neither in the descriptions of the present state, nor in plans for the future there is any mention of developing means to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum by measuring students' results against the standards of the intended curriculum, let alone to relate these to relevant background variables. The National Education Institute is however, planning to evaluate the impact the *matura* has on schools.

Slovenia has undertaken a daunting task in revising the subject content for all general subjects in primary and secondary education in a relative short period of time. The responsible bodies, the MoES Education Development Unit, the NCC and the National Education Institute, are working a miracle in producing subject catalogues in such a short period and at the same time involving many representatives of the Slovenian educational community. It is therefore understandable that the first products may be imperfect and might need some revision over time. Indeed the whole process must be subject to a strategy for continuous improvement. On the whole, development of subject syllabi for secondary education is facing the same problems as for primary education: no explicit cross-curricular outcome standards and lack of experience with shifting from

content- to skills-orientation. The review team's examination suggests that the second versions should have less content and more aims and attainment targets for communicative, decision making and problem solving skills, and (better) standards to indicate the depths of the included targets. This accords with the views expressed by teachers.

The review team believe that it is necessary to keep the NCC in place for a much longer time than was envisaged in order to maintain the thrust for change and to collect information on implementation. During the mission, it was announced that this Council would be given the time necessary to complete its task, i.e. delivering the catalogues for all subjects. Much more time, however, will be needed to deal with all the revisions that practical use of the catalogues will bring to light. It was suggested that this task should go to the National Education Institute. However, as setting standards for the quality of education is a core responsibility for any government, it seems that this task should rest with a body that owes direct responsibility to the Government. The National Education Institute assumes a more independent position and would therefore not be the appropriate institution to execute this task. It should have professional input into it, however, as is the case at present.

One of the principles of the *gymnasium* programme is free choice in terms of students taking more responsibility for their programmes of study. There is, however, a question as to how much choice really exists and how this principle can be realised. The current structure involves division into streams with different orientations which seems to reflect too much the traditional division between humanities and science and technology. Students seldom move from one stream to another. The White Paper is proposing to introduce four streams with many common elements and easier transfer: a natural science programme, a social sciences programme, a languages and classical programme and a general *gymnasium* programme. The review team regards as high priority more effective connection between the various programmes and further studies in higher education, and easier student transfer.

Lack of willingness to accept responsibility for study and work among graduates, especially from technical schools, was reported during some visits. According to some spokesmen, this is a remnant of the former culture where employees were not particularly encouraged to assume responsibility. Although motivation to learn seems not to be a problem yet in *gymnasia*, it could become so in the near future, as it has in other countries. Willingness to assume responsibility could be encouraged by introducing changes in the curriculum so that the responsibility for learning will be more with the student than with the teacher. More emphasis on tutoring than on lecturing, setting tasks that can be done independently instead of frontal classroom teaching and including applied learning opportunities would all be essential elements of a different approach.

Examinations are an important driving force in any curriculum reform. During visits it was reported that the present *matura* would encourage rote learning or "factology". The National Examination Institute, however, pointed out that both the catalogues and the papers themselves are only for 40 per cent based on the recall of content. A key issue in educational reform is making students more responsible for their own learning. From this point of view restructuring the curriculum would imply converting the content into tasks to be executed by students independently, rather than sitting in classrooms and listening patiently to teachers. The result of this shift in approach should be written out in attainment targets that specify skills (can do, collect, organise, evaluate, communicate, etc.) rather than academic knowledge. Clear cut examples of tasks operationalising these skills would be invaluable to inform stakeholders. This is the ideal, but defining new attainment targets and teaching practices would be very complex. This would probably

require a special task force, setting standards and elaborating examples, with a view to new skills being assessed in the *matura* in a few years' time.

The establishment of the National Examination Centre and the way it is fulfilling its functions has been invaluable for the development of secondary general education. The positive effects of the *matura* examination are felt throughout the system and were reported many times during the mission. The introduction of the *matura* has not only established a clear external control between school-based assessment and formal examinations, but also, by making formerly implicit standards explicit, between the intended and implemented curriculum. The results of the *matura* also provide a basis for evaluating the achieved curriculum. Preparing students for *matura* exams fosters co-operation and discussion between teachers. *Matura* exams have a backwash-effect on teaching and learning, often positive, sometimes negative. Last but not least, evidence is emerging that the *matura* is influencing results and retention rates in higher education in a positive way. Because the extreme importance of the *matura* examinations for students, teachers, school managers and parents, all stakeholders are watching closely the quality of the exams. Departures from catalogues, fluctuations in difficulty grade, changes in style or format are liable to much criticism. With the single exception of a much too difficult mathematics paper, the exams have been well received till now.

It is extremely important to safeguard the many positive functions of the *matura* examinations, and to maintain -- and where possible to improve -- the quality of the papers. The political and financial support that the National *Matura* Commission and the National Examination Centre have had should be continued and provisions should be made so that they may cope with their increasing tasks.

The division of responsibilities between the *Matura* Commission, the Subject Commissions (in which the National Education Centre is participating) and the National Examination Centre, was designed to guarantee a professional and democratic control over such an important instrument as the *matura* examinations. In practice, the separation between the Subject Commissions and the Examination Centre is less strict. The review team has considered carefully what the relationship should be between these two bodies. It would prefer that the subject commissions, or at least their chair people, should report to the Examination Centre. This would facilitate much of the developmental work that lies ahead, and especially the co-ordination of it. If this suggestion by the review team is not practicable, there should be a clearly understood relationship between the Subject Commissions and the Examination Centre to ensure the closest possible working relationship. It is felt that this combination of production and development of assessment instruments would be assured.

The results of the *matura* exams may be used for other purposes than only certification of individual students. Secondary analysis, maybe combined with collection of some easily available background data (e.g. gender) would yield valuable feedback data for educational management. It is suggested that more use is made of *matura* results for evaluation of educational achievement of larger units than the individual student, e.g. schools, communities or regions, where possible in relation to background variables. The success of the *matura* will sooner or later cause strong inflation of the currency of school-based final examinations. It should be considered whether to replace the school-based final examinations by a system that makes student achievement comparable on a national scale. (Chapter 7 discusses this issue). A national examination like the *matura* is not necessarily the only way. Accreditation of centres or other forms of external legitimisation are also options. In secondary education, as in primary education, there is a need for professional assessment instruments such as

specialised tests for class room use, student monitoring systems and national assessment instruments. The shift from input control towards output steering will sooner or later lead to the necessity of introduction of such instruments. It should be considered to install facilities at the National Examination Centre to start with developing such instruments.

Vocational and adult education

The development of a standards system is if anything even more crucial in the vocational area, and quite rightly it is regarded as a high priority for Slovenia. A review of the material from Slovenia suggests that skill standards are at the moment being defined in a fairly narrow way. The Regional Social Partnership Paper spells out the first task of the chambers in co-operation with others, including the social partners, is to establish the job (occupation) nomenclature and the job description -- other materials support this rather narrow occupation specific approach to setting standards. The following paragraphs outline why a broader conception of a family of standards may be more helpful, and the review team believes that the Slovenian authorities might consider this as their standards work develops.

Industry or occupational standards can include: core academic, generic workplace readiness, industry core, occupational family and occupational (or job) specific:

- Core academic standards cover those subject matter areas such as mathematics, language, arts and science that are necessary for functioning as a member of society and help develop career-related skills.

- Generic workplace readiness standards cover those generic skills and qualities that workers must have in order to learn and adapt to the demands of any job; *e.g.* personal attributes, interpersonal skills, thinking and problem solving, communication, academic foundations and use of technology.

- Industry core standards apply to all, or nearly all of the occupations in a particular industry. Thus, there are core standards for the hospitality industry that are distinct from core standards for the electronics industry. This first layer of industry-specific standards helps to ensure that students and workers have a solid foundation in their industry of interest and is therefore critical to career-preparation programmes.

- Occupational family standards specify the knowledge and skills that are common to a related set of occupations or functions within an industry. For example, within the health care industry, occupations in medical laboratory, imaging and radiography can be thought of as belonging to a larger diagnostic family or cluster of occupations. The occupations in this diagnostic family share a focus on creating a picture of patient health at a single point in time. Whereas individual job-specific requirements may change, depending on changes in the job market as well as changes in the structure of the workplace, occupational family level standards provide a broader base of skills for individuals. These broader standards help ensure that workers have the requisite skills to adapt to such changes and are better prepared for making vertical and horizontal changes in their career paths.

- Occupational or job specific standards address the skill expectations of a specific occupation. This is the level at which many existing career-preparation programmes and certification systems focus.

There is no common European standard upon which to draw, but it is important that there should be in Slovenia a common strategic vision about the multiple uses of vocational standards. The review team feels that responsibilities in this area are rather diffused, with the NES and the Centre for Vocational Education being involved, with adult education on a rather separate track. If the intention is to have industry standards as only a part of the initial preparation of young people, then a curriculum driven "dual system" model can suffice. However, if the desire is to use industry or occupational standards for a broader range of purposes regardless of the level or the funding source or institution providing the training (e.g. worksite, NES, university, technical colleges, etc.) then a different and broader version of standards system should be developed.

If this broader approach is to be pursued, one way of proceeding would be to move towards establishing a quasi-independent national board composed of representatives from both the private sector and the education and training infrastructure (e.g. NCC, higher education, *matura*, vocational education council, adult education, NES). This approach would mean that industry has the clear lead responsibility for identification of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for career progression from entry into the highest levels of professional services and management.

Helpful lessons can be learned from international experience. In some countries assessment methods are seen as insufficiently rigorous, with a deficiency in theoretical and analytical components. Systems can often be bureaucratic and burdensome, or unduly "technical", which can lose employer support. And care must be taken to ensure that the qualifications are not too narrow, which could lead to new and damaging rigidities. On the approach outlined in the last paragraph Slovenia could select broad industry or occupational clusters from the outset around which industry-led organisations would be established, clusters which have meaning for the supply side providers as well as the firms. Utility for the supply side providers should include using the levels in order to establish equivalencies for the development of programmes of studies moving up from basic education to the highest levels of professional training in specialisations.

Standards also need to meet the needs of employers for internal firm purposes such as recruitment, worksite training guides and possibly even performance incentives for workers. Therefore, employers need the occupation-specific knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) (thus the expected interest and support from the craft employers). A possible solution would be to have the broad-based industry establish industry or occupational sub-clusters.

Two forms of certification and quality assurance could be pursued via the industry councils "lead bodies", one for individuals and the other for programmes. Given the size of country and for cost reasons the actual awarding of the certificates could be done by the state Certification Board but the industry and occupational lead organisations should be given the responsibility to help design assessments -- and even participate in the assessment process. In the future programme, certification or accreditation could be established, akin to a seal of approval by industry and applicable for all occupational education and training programmes.

Obviously Slovenia must choose the path for vocational standards which best suits the country and its institutions. Some of the above suggestions may be fitted into the Slovenia plan, but there is no ready blueprint which could be directly applied. One important point, however, is that the

strategic path towards a competence-based system must be very clearly set out, and once all stakeholders are agreed on a national system which also accords with general EU principles, it must be followed through with clear responsibilities for action and a joint commitment to making it work. Experience shows that in this area a change of course can be costly and disruptive.

Higher education

As in other areas of education, quality in higher education depends to a high degree on the qualifications of the teaching staff. A crucial element of academic autonomy is the institutional responsibility to select and promote staff. Implementing the Higher Education Act the universities laid down criteria for faculty promotion, which focus on research performance. The "Starting Points for the Master Plan" call for measures to improve the teaching qualifications of the staff. To be effective they are to play a role in staff promotion too. With respect to programmes of study, the task of securing minimum standards, is assigned to the Council for Higher Education, who in 1994 in implementing the Act adopted "Criteria and Procedures on the Accreditation of Study programmes and Higher Education Institutions" and started work immediately. It accredited seven independent institutions and their programmes. The existing programmes of the two universities have also undergone a process of scrutiny. In 1995 and 1996 the majority of programmes were examined, resulting in some programmes being withdrawn. The procedure is rather different for independent institutions and universities. For the former, the Council has to agree, and without that agreement the programme cannot proceed. For university programmes the Council delivers an opinion. An adverse opinion means that Government funding is no longer provided, but the university can continue the programme if it can find other sources of funding.

The task of Quality Assessment Commission is to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of teaching, research, art and professional activities of higher education institutions and to report once a year to the senates of higher education institutions, the Council for Higher Education and the Council for Science and Technology. The Commission is to be composed of representatives of all scientific and art disciplines and professional fields and shall conduct its business according to rules determined in co-operation with the senates of higher education institutions and criteria defined by the Council for Higher Education in co-operation with the Council for Science and Technology. So far it seems that evaluation is progressing only slowly, and the "Starting Points of the Master Plan" call for a speeding up of the procedures.

With regards to the quality of teaching, a major concern has been the drop-out rate in higher education. The main hindrance to success is the transition from the first to the second year of study. In the 1980s only 57 per cent on the average of the full-time students passed from the first to the second year; in the 1990s transition rates rose to 66 per cent and reached 70 per cent in 1995/6. As the drop-out rate of part-timers is higher, total transition is lower. It is too early to conclude from the data that the reforms in upper secondary school, especially the recently introduced *matura* have led to a better preparation of the new entrants. Other possible explanations are that graduates of *gymnasia*, are more likely to continue higher education, because there are fewer labour-market outlets as is the case with graduates from vocational routes; or the attractiveness of the labour market for higher education graduates and their lower unemployment rate may be leading more people to stay on. A follow-up on the impact of the *matura* might clarify its contribution to study success.

Recommendations

As with primary education, outcome-oriented standards are required for secondary education, and work towards this should be given high priority.

Arrangements whereby pupils are able to move between streams in secondary education, currently being changed, should be made more flexible.

While safeguarding the positive aspects of the *matura*, the National Examination Centre should be asked to develop specialised assessment instruments, other than the existing examination structure, for use in the future.

The structure of institutions involved in the reform of secondary education seems broadly right for the current stage of reform, and in particular the central role of the NCC is important. The MoES should, however, keep the institutional structure under review, with the aim of simplifying it when appropriate.

The development of vocational standards is still at an early stage, but the full development of a competence-based system of standards should be given high priority. It must have a clear relationship to labour market needs and should create a hierarchy or family of standards which industries and occupations can use.

The effect of the *matura* examinations on teaching and learning should be carefully researched and evaluated.

Consideration should be given to how the accreditation of university programmes might be accelerated and deepened, in the interests of quality assurance.

CHAPTER 5

REGIONALISATION AND DECENTRALISATION

One of the issues which emerged at different levels in the review was whether there should be a greater degree of decentralisation in the determination of education and training policy. There was of course decentralisation of a kind in the pre-independence regime, with self-management of schools. This however led to an anarchic situation, and the decentralisation referred to in this report means an effective chain of policy-making and delivery which properly integrates national policy making with local and regional interests.

There are several arguments in favour of this approach. Firstly, Slovenia is moving rapidly away from the centralised economy and decision-making structures of pre-independence. Secondly, educational and training establishments are mainly situated in localities and serve the people in the surrounding areas. Circumstances are different in the regions and localities of Slovenia, and a greater voice for localities in determining what policies best meet their needs may lead to better outcomes as well as encouraging local democracy. Thirdly, Slovenia is engaged on a revision of its regional structure and this provides an opportunity for the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), which should have a voice in the overall regionalisation decisions, to consider at the same time the future structure of the education and training system.

There are of course arguments to the contrary. Slovenia is a small country in which excessive decentralisation may not be efficient. At this stage in the development of a newly independent country, with young institutions already in a process of change, it may be best to have a strong central focus for the development of policy. Sub-national bodies have to be able to handle the issues put down to them; and of course decentralisation has to deliver better services: it is not necessarily a good thing per se.

The general approach of the review team is to favour decentralisation. It is the preferred approach of the MoES, and of many of those whom the review team met at regional and local levels, and it is consistent with the trend in most EU countries for devolution of responsibility to lower administrative levels. But one has to be clear that there are two different principles underpinning the argument for decentralisation. One is that it is consistent with the move towards democracy, choice and transparency, and the other is that more efficient outcomes will be achieved through a decentralised system. Obviously, in reality elements of both will co-exist in most situations, but the

balance of the arguments in favour may be different for different parts of the education system, and they are therefore dealt with separately.

It may, however, be helpful first to outline the broad principles of which responsibilities belong to the "centre" and which should and can be decentralised in the interests of efficiency or democracy and transparency. The centre's responsibilities would include:

- political leadership;
- establishment of national goals and standards agreed across all relevant Ministries;
- broad structure of curriculum and assessment methodology;
- establishing the framework and accreditation of institutions;
- examination of educational outcomes of the system;
- evaluation of the system and its parts;
- establishing information systems for planning and guiding the system as a whole.

The responsibilities of the decentralised institutions, at regional or local level, would include:

- setting regional and local goals within the national framework;
- involvement of regional and local stakeholders through formal and informal mechanisms;
- decisions on regional and local processes, including organisation and management of institutions, and planning of teaching and content of instruction;
- staff assessment and development;
- some resource allocation functions;

The following paragraphs illustrate how these broad principles might apply in Slovenia.

Schools

The school system is already quite highly decentralised in its administration and funding. Municipalities are responsible for the establishment of pre-school institutions in line with criteria laid down in legislation, and they can also establish secondary schools with the agreement of the MoES. Schools have a council composed of representatives of the municipality, the teachers, parents, and students. This council is responsible for appointing the head teacher and approving the annual work-plan for the school. The head teacher then has a wide range of responsibilities under the law including the leadership of the school in pedagogic areas and the management of resources. The head is also charged with recruitment of teaching staff in the school.

The funding system varies between primary and secondary schools. For primary schools the salaries of teachers are paid directly to the school from the MoES. The scale of remuneration is laid down by law, and an individual teacher's pay depends on his or her teaching load, and also on qualification. Most other costs of primary schools are borne by the municipalities e.g. repairs, utilities, equipment, though about one-third, related to teachers and pupils, is funded by the State. For secondary schools (*gymnasium*), and for technical and vocational training colleges the whole cost is met from central Government. Major capital investment is in all cases funded centrally, after consultation with municipalities.

One issue which might be considered is whether the funding of secondary schools should be place on the same basis as primary schools, with municipalities bearing a larger share of the costs. This would obviously need to be considered in the light of municipalities' overall budgets, and could only be phased in over time. It would however give the municipalities a considerably greater interest and involvement in the secondary schools, and it could help to bind them -- and possibly other stakeholders within the area -- even more closely to the effectiveness and performance of their schools.

The review team visited many schools during its time in Slovenia, and asked teachers and head teachers about whether they felt that they had enough autonomy in decision-making. In general they were quite satisfied with the existing situation. Head teachers seem to welcome the challenge presented by the reforms, and the important leadership role they had in this, and the commitment to change seemed very high. There were some concerns that the administrative burden could escalate as the reforms progressed.

One area where the MoES would like to see greater variation is in the curriculum and the schools visited were asked whether they felt that there should be a greater degree of discretion in the subjects included in the curriculum. This might mean, for example, that a school was able to relate the curriculum subjects more closely to their own particular area of the country. On the whole, schools did not see this as necessary. But taking a wider view, schools in Slovenia seem to have reached a level of autonomy and self-management which allows them to offer pupils opportunities to make their own decisions concerning their studies, as well as teachers to participate in the planning of their teaching.

Vocational education and training

The organisation and delivery of education and training is the subject of intense debate in many countries, and there are many models to choose from. The review team found that many of those interviewed at regional and local levels were concerned that arrangements did not seem to work as well as they should. This was not primarily a matter of what should be done at national and what at sub-national levels, so much as a feeling that things at regional and local level could be improved.

The review team considers that the progress made in restructuring the vocational education system over the past few years has been most impressive. The system had declined considerably during the 1980s, partly because of earlier educational reforms which had come to be seen as ill-judged and not delivering the required results, and partly because the self-management system was not conducive to vocational education and training. It was therefore necessary to establish the legal basis for a modern system, and in particular to define the national framework within which vocational education should take place.

The Ministry's approach was similar to that adopted by many EU countries. The general line was that vocational education should be better adapted to the free market economy which was coming into being in Slovenia, and that there had to be a close relationship between vocational education and the development of the labour market. A number of specific responsibilities were accepted as being for the Government. These included:

- new paths within the education system through which vocational qualifications could be gained;
- a modernised curriculum, discussed in Chapter 2;
- a certification system based on competencies linked with the system of educational qualifications, discussed in Chapter 4;
- a move towards a new classification of occupations which would enable a change to considering the outputs of the system rather than the processes or the curriculum inputs;
- the establishment of a Centre of Vocational Education and Training to help with strategic policy formulation and advice on the development of the system as a whole.

Much remains to be done here, and from the review team's consideration and the experience of other countries which have been down these roads a number of observations may be made. Firstly, as Chapter 4 has already pointed out, it is extremely important to develop occupational standards based on competencies within the same framework as educational qualifications. This is not at all easy and can cause difficulties with those who feel, wrongly, that educational qualifications are somehow being devalued. But establishing "parity of esteem" is necessary to give the right signal to students on the value of vocational studies.

Secondly, it is clear to the review team that the Centre for Vocational Education and Training is seriously under-resourced to do the job the MoES wants them to do. Indeed, there is a question as to whether the role of the Centre is really clear enough for it to establish effective priorities. At the moment there appears to be a risk that the Centre has insufficient management resources and too few trained staff to enable it to carry out the functions it has been given. The Centre should in the review team's opinion have a key role in providing training information, analysis, data end expertise, all of them important in preparations for EU structural funds support. The review team therefore recommends that the role and objectives of the Centre be considered by the MoES and the social partners, particularly employers, and that it is given appropriate resources to meet its agreed functions and work-plan.

Below national level the review team, and many of those interviewed, believe that there is no clear focus for the planning and delivery of vocational education and training. If the system is to meet the demands of the labour market and the aspirations of those undertaking vocational education, a better co-ordinated approach is necessary. There are several elements to this. One is the need for coherence between administrative boundaries. This is not just a matter of bureaucratic convenience: there is experience in other countries of different boundaries between, say, the training authority and the public employment service preventing the effective delivery of services at local level. The review team believes that the regional level is the appropriate one for a new focus to be created, and it is therefore regional boundaries which should be brought into line, with municipal boundaries being aligned with regions, if possible.

Aligned regional boundaries will be helpful, but the more important objective is to establish policies for vocational education and training in regions -- which, after all have very different needs and circumstances -- to which all the various interests in government and the regions will subscribe. There are various ways to achieve this, but the key question is whether or not new formal machinery is needed at regional level. There are reasons quite apart from education and training policy why this might be advantageous. Establishing the necessary machinery and policies to benefit from EU structural funds, particularly the Social Fund, will be very important, with an administration which is able to construct regional plans and to manage EU structural funds resources. This will require the formation of a network of partnerships, between public and private sectors, employees, trade unions, regional and local bodies, the voluntary sector and so on. These kinds of principles apply equally to the education and training areas, and the review team believes that some kind of "workforce development board" in the regions could be an important means of improving the development of policy and its effective delivery.

The precise arrangements would need careful consideration by the government and consultation with the various interests involved, but the key principles are pretty clear. First, all the stakeholders should be represented on the board. This would include the MoES, the Ministry of Labour including the NES, the Ministry concerned with the regions, the regional representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and of Crafts, employers and trade unions, the municipalities, higher and further education and schools. In view of the key role of employers as "consumers" of vocational education and training and their potential as providers, there should be a strong element of private sector employers including small firms. Any such boards should help develop employer networks within regions, and should establish close links and enter into partnership with other bodies in the regions concerned with economic development, for example development agencies.

The main objectives of regional boards should be to develop vocational education and training within the policies laid down by the Government. They should therefore have the responsibility of considering the needs of their region and smaller areas within it, the adequacy of current provision, the priorities for the future and how they might reasonably be accommodated. The various partners would then take action in their own areas of responsibility in line with the conclusions of the board. Specific problems emerging during the review team's discussions which the boards might address include persuading employers of the vital importance of training in the new more competitive European and global markets and individuals of the crucial importance of lifelong learning; modernising the vocational education opportunities provided in schools, including the difficult problem of retraining teachers; and stimulating adult education which is necessary both to help re-skill those in the labour force, and to make a reality of lifelong learning. Developing monitoring and evaluation of provision is very important at both national and regional levels. The structure of vocational education under the new legislation is quite complex, and an assessment should be undertaken over time to see which routes are apparently most effective. This might allow some reallocation of resources towards the more effective areas.

One point which is perhaps worthy of specific note is the role of regional boards in promoting private training providers. The review team saw several examples of small-scale local providers catering for a range of skills to which adults could come, often at their own expense, to brush up their skills or to begin to learn new ones. Given the certainty of further structural change, such training organisations could make a very useful, if limited, contribution in local areas. They may, however, need support, not necessarily financial but in such areas as information about future trends, promotion, and monitoring.

One key question about such boards is whether their remit should go beyond a co-ordinating responsibility to resource allocation. It would be possible for the MoES to "regionalise" the vocational education and training budget, with each board being responsible for allocating the budget between activities, geographical areas, and stakeholders. Again there is experience of both approaches in OECD countries, and there are arguments on both sides. A co-ordinating role can in practice turn out to be ineffective if powerful stakeholders prefer to follow their own agenda rather than that which a co-ordinated approach would suggest. Resource allocation would certainly give the boards teeth, but therein lies the problem. There has to be a very clear understanding between government and the boards on what they can do and what the limits on their power are. The boards will be doing rather different things in different regions -- that is after all their *raison d'être* and they would have little point if they were simply delivering national policy unchanged everywhere -- but they cannot be allowed to undermine the government's agreed policies. A final important point is that the control mechanisms on bodies with resource allocation functions would have to ensure proper accountability for public money, and this could lead to discontent in the regions because of apparent bureaucracy: this has happened in other countries.

One possible way forward would be to set up regional boards on a voluntary non-statutory basis, and to monitor how effective they were over a period of years. If they needed powers or financial responsibilities, this could then be considered, though the level of co-operation required between stakeholders to make the boards effective could not be secured by legislation. If people do not want to work together, legislation will not make them do so.

Higher education

There has been considerable discussion in Slovenia about the desirability of a third university in addition to those in Ljubljana and Maribor. This would be sited in the coastal area of Koper, where there are already a number of post-secondary institutions, including the College of Hotel and Travel Administration, the College of Management and the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport and a branch of the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana. The review team heard different views on the desirability of this. There was enthusiasm from the Koper region, and there is also strong political pressure. There may also be an argument that a new institution would be able to avoid some of the perceived inflexibilities of the two existing universities.

The Higher Education Master Plan foresees an increase in student numbers over the next ten years or so, and when the number of school leavers starts to fall for demographic reasons, it is planned that the participation rate in higher education will rise so that student numbers will stabilise. In addition, it is intended that the numbers of part-time students will increase which might support a more decentralised system, since part-time students are more likely to want to attend an institution close to home. Higher education is almost entirely publicly financed with about 70 per cent of the cost coming from the MoES, and the Higher Education Master Plan is likely to increase the cost. The number of students will increase; full-time students do not pay fees for their education; and there is an intention to change the system whereby part-time students are charged fees, presumably by bringing it into line with that for full-time students.

Expenditure on higher education is therefore bound to rise over the next ten years. The question is how the increased student numbers should be met in terms of the institutional structure. It can be argued that a country as small as Slovenia does not need more than two universities. Both existing institutions are capable of being expanded, especially the University of Maribor, thus

achieving the economies of scale which go with size, and if provision can be made more flexible this could help accommodate the changing pattern of demand by students. The review team believes that on purely educational grounds the case for a third university is very doubtful.

More consideration should be given to the possibility of expanding provision in university-linked institutions and professional tertiary institutions in different parts of Slovenia to give the geographical differentiation which could be important, and the very important role of vocational colleges in providing post-secondary education attuned to the needs of the labour market and individuals must be borne in mind. These bodies, or indeed forms of post-secondary institutions charged with working with employers within a region, as well as with other vocational providers, could be a more effective way of achieving additional provision. It would also appear that the marginal cost of expanding or creating tertiary institutions is likely to be lower than that of creating another university, with the administrative overheads this would involve and with the inevitable pressure for post-graduate facilities which, if necessary, might be much more efficiently met through international student movements.

Recommendations

Decentralisation within the education system is an important goal which should be pursued, so as to involve stakeholders at regional and local level more closely with decision-making.

The MoES should consider whether the current method of funding schools provides the right signals within a decentralised system.

Decentralisation is particularly important for vocational education. There appears to be no clear focus in this area at regional level and the Government should consider the proposal for "workforce development boards" at regional level, with either co-ordinating responsibilities or resource allocation powers.

The Ministry should consider carefully the educational case for a third university in Slovenia, the implications for public expenditure on education and the opportunity cost for other parts of the system, as against the expansion of post secondary vocational and professional institutions.

CHAPTER 6

EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES IN THE SYSTEM

This chapter deals with a range of issues. It covers the approach to education and training within government; the effect of demography on the education system which has been referred to in several chapters; the question of the third university; and the importance of an effective information strategy to monitor the system.

Co-ordinated government approach

Slovenia has made very rapid progress towards the reform of its education system, and a modern education system is regarded as a national priority. This is as it should be, but the review team's discussions suggested that it might be necessary to deepen the involvement of all relevant government departments with the implementation of the reforms, and especially with a longer term view about the structure and development of the education and training system.

In the early days of reform, the process was very much driven by the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES). This is not surprising given its responsibilities within government, but there was relatively little input by the Ministry of Labour, which obviously had an interest, both as a provider of information about the labour market and a contributor to the most appropriate structure of vocational education. The limited role of the Ministry of Labour is, however, understandable. In the early 1980s when the reforms were taking place, the restructuring of the economy and the large state enterprises was leading to a very sharp rise in unemployment, and this was the major preoccupation of the Ministry of Labour.

One result of the early concentration on education issues is that the Centre of Vocational Education which, of all bodies, should be conscious of the labour market dimension, is largely staffed by educationalists thinking from an educational standpoint. Its budget is still largely funded by the MoES. This is not to disparage the work the Centre is doing, and indeed there is now a greater understanding of and interest in the work of the Centre by the Ministry of Labour, with a co-ordinating body to bring the views of both ministries to bear on the Centre's activities. The review team believes that an expansion and extension of the Centre's work is highly desirable, not least in relation to skill standards.

It is now accepted that education and training has to be an important part of overall employment policy, but it is acknowledged that there is some way to go before the structure and organisation allow this to become a reality. The review team would suggest a number of requirements. First and most important, there must be a common and agreed view within government about the trends in the economy, the labour market and society, to underpin a strategy for labour force development. Recent developments within the EU emphasise the importance of this. Member states are now required to draw up national employment plans, covering employment, training, business development, unemployment policies and so on, for discussion at EU level. An inter-ministerial structure or committee with a clear mandate to address strategies towards these issues would therefore be a significant step forward.

One aspect of this would be better information to underpin policy, not in terms of detailed manpower forecasting or planning which has proved counter-productive in most countries, and which would have resonances in Slovenia of the approach followed in the former command economy of Yugoslavia. But a better information system is needed. Among the key information needs are a broad appreciation of the kinds of skills likely to be in demand, other areas likely to decline, the regional pattern of skill requirements if possible, the short-term trend of unemployment and the likely characteristics of the unemployed, and what is happening in neighbouring countries.

Work is already proceeding on many elements of such a system, involving a number of interests. Slovenia has been involved in the EU Phare funded project aiming at establishing, under the auspices of the European Training Foundation (ETF), a National Observatory for collecting and analysing the information on vocational education and labour market developments in the country. The National Observatory has been located in the Centre of Vocational Education since 1996 and it has so far produced valuable information on issues and dilemmas of vocational education and training, and the development of occupational trends. The Steering Committee of the National Observatory consists of representatives of different ministries, social partners, and employers associations. The National Observatory may act as an important information point inside the education system, but also between Slovenia and other countries. This element of the national information system of education is developed in collaboration with other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States, and the European Union.

It is of course essential that the information system contain only information which will be useful for the formulation and delivery of policy. Its outputs must be widely available so that different parts of the education and training system can take better informed decisions. Two particular areas may be mentioned. One is the provision in the vocational education system. The school system inevitably changes slowly, and the better the information available on the trend of skill demand, the more flexibly can provision adjust. Other training providers would also benefit, in enterprises, private institutions, vocational colleges, and so on. The second is the provision of high-quality advice on careers and occupations. Many countries have found this to be a weak spot in their employment and educational policies. For young people leaving school there is usually a system to advise them on career choice, though it may be of uncertain quality. For adults there is frequently no provision at all, except what the public employment service can provide to unemployed people.

Countries for whom lifelong learning is a policy objective, as it is in Slovenia, need to have good sources of advice throughout the labour market and educational systems. This means good and reliable information, but it also means a structure of delivering the information which is timely and effective, and which operates at regional level and below. The Slovenian authorities would have to consider whether there is an existing focus for this activity or whether some new organisation was

needed. One possibility, based on the United States model, would be the creation of a co-ordinating council with representatives from the various agencies and interests concerned. This would establish standards for labour market and education information services, with a clear view of what would be cost-effective; and it would package information for use by all the constituents. There may be other options for Slovenia, but a determined effort must be made to improve the quantity and quality of career information.

Higher education

One issue which came up in several of the review team's meetings was the degree to which the higher education system was responding to the changing needs of the economy and the labour market. A number of those interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the degree to which the universities did not seem to have adjusted to the changes of the past few years. There was a feeling that the graduates produced by the universities were insufficiently attuned to the needs of industry. For example, engineering graduates were felt to be more relevant to the large state enterprises of the past than to the growing number of small firms and the service sector. It is difficult to say whether this view is wholly justified, but it was strongly expressed.

The document Starting Points for the Higher Education Master Plan sets out very clearly the aims of future higher education policy. It is felt that there are insufficient graduates to meet Slovenia's development objectives. The proposals in the document are wide-ranging, and many of them are highly commendable. For example, the network of university and study centres in towns should be preserved and reinforced; higher education should relate to the communities; universities should have regard to labour market needs, and should forge partnerships with economic stakeholders; they should try to reduce dispersed programmes of study to improve quality; they should reduce the level of drop outs; and there should be increased co-operation with institutions in other countries, and with EU programmes.

The real question is whether all of these reforms, which would represent a sea-change in higher education institution attitudes, can be brought about. The legal basis for reform has been established through the Higher Education Act and a decree on the Reorganisation of Universities. The process of change, however, has not come to an end. The legal integration of heterogeneous institutions is only a first step and much is still at risk. Even countries where there is a strong tradition of efficient co-ordination by universities, experience shows that the centrifugal power of disciplines and the merger of institutions is nowhere an easy task. Already when the two Slovenian universities drafted their constitutions it became evident that the institutions which were to form the universities are reluctant to accept effective co-ordination at the university level. Internally, both universities even split up into still more units. Thus the University of Ljubljana now consists of 20 faculties, three art academies and three professional higher education institutions. The University of Maribor comprises nine faculties and one professional higher education institution. A glance at the size -- the University of Ljubljana with 38 600 students and the University of Maribor with 16 000 students -- illustrates the high degree of internal differentiation. These figures do not include post-graduate students.

This raises the question whether the organisational structures and the power of the central organs are sufficient for efficient co-ordination and to handle conflicting demands. There are signs of a danger that conflicts remain unsolved and are passed back to the Government which would threaten the newly acquired autonomy and academic self-government. While fully appreciating the practical

and political problems, the review team considers that more effective government and decision-making at the university level is highly desirable in the interests of reform. Like all other institutions in the education and training areas, universities have to come to terms with the new realities of Slovenia as a market economy with a changing structure of industry, and with an early prospect of EU membership. Adjustment of resources to meet new demands by industry, students and society -- never easy in any higher education system -- would be facilitated by a more centralised system of internal government and management within each institution.

The Government is currently in the process of reforming the funding of higher education. Hitherto the system financed individual study programmes within faculties, which was bureaucratic and wasteful. Under the new system faculties will receive a lump sum for their programmes, with a small amount going to the university at the centre. The aim is to make the Government of the universities more efficient. Another change, currently before Parliament is in the internal governance of universities, whereby legislation will allow younger staff to have more of a voice in decisions within the universities. It remains to be seen whether these developments will address the concerns expressed in the previous paragraphs.

Another issue in higher education is the funding and organisation of research. The Ministry of Science and Technology is responsible for funding research and research institutes. There are several such institutes concentrated in scientific and engineering areas. In the 1980s their funding came mainly from industry, but with independence and the collapse of the large state enterprises research funds were sharply reduced. As a result the institutes now receive most of their money from the state, though it is hoped that industrial funding will rise from the current low level. The relationship between the universities and the institutes has been a cause of concern for some time. There is obviously some overlap, both for the very highly qualified staff that both require and in competition for research funds. There have been attempts in the past to link universities with research institutions through joint appointments but without much success, partly because of the difficulty in getting institute researchers to teach. On research, the universities lost out to the institutes, because earlier legislation emphasised their teaching activities and because research funding was not systematic. A stronger integration of research in higher education institutions has been a major aim of the Higher Education Act, partly to improve the quality of post-graduate activity in the universities.

It is, however, recognised that this will be difficult to achieve. Research is currently funded on a project basis, though there is an intention to move more of the research institute funding on to a programme basis. Universities consider that the competition for project funds is unfair because of the extra burden university staff have with teaching, and because of the concentration of research institutes on specific areas of work. Some new developments may help alleviate these problems. One is the establishment of funding or applications for inter-faculty research or co-operative projects between universities and research institutions and another is private sector promotion of post-graduate studies. This research will be assessed to ensure a greater certainty of quality. Another is a recent agreement on salaries within universities and research institutions, to provide greater flexibility.

There is a further issue which concerns them, the possible establishment of graduate schools in the research institutes or possibly a separate national graduate school. The review team considers that the uncertainty in these areas runs the risk of demoralising researchers in both domains and that a separate graduate school is likely to damage the universities by siphoning off an important part of their activities. This issue must be addressed in the debate on the future of higher education.

Demography and the education system

Chapter 1 pointed out that Slovenia has a low birth rate and that this has already resulted in falling numbers in primary schools. The reduction in primary school enrolment will continue, and this will raise questions for education policy about the pattern of schools and the distribution of resources. The immediate issue is that many primary schools are already below what might be regarded as their most efficient size. This is linked with the geographical distribution and the size structure of primary schools. Like many countries with a widely dispersed population, Slovenia has many small and remote schools. Very small schools can cost up to 50 per cent more than large ones in terms of unit costs. Most of the cost of schools is teacher salaries -- about 80 per cent -- which is relatively inflexible. As the number of pupils falls, there may be opportunities to eliminate the two-shift system operating in some schools, or schools can reduce class size, which may be beneficial though Slovenia does not appear to have unusually large class sizes by international standards.

At some stage, however, policy will have to consider more difficult questions, including whether some schools should be closed. This may be more feasible in urban areas where pupils can travel to a different school fairly easily, though the redeployment and possibly retraining of teachers could be much more difficult. In country areas or small towns, however, there is bound to resistance to closing the primary school, and this is entirely understandable. The school is an important part of community life and if children have to travel to another town or village, this may contribute to later depopulation. And the problem of redeploying surplus teachers is bound to be more serious.

Current policy is against closing schools partly for educational reasons but also because of the social, regional and community effects of closure. As demographic trends continue and the falling number of pupils extends to secondary schools, the pressures on the MoES will increase with the resources of teachers and buildings being used inefficiently. In considering this issue, the review team felt that the demographic effects of falling numbers of young people was a matter which should not reasonably be placed solely on the MoES. This seems to the review team a matter for the Government as a whole, and should be a matter for collective discussion between ministries. It can certainly be argued that maintaining schools in remote areas for at least partly non-educational reasons ought to be reflected in the way such resources are funded, by a proportion of the costs being met from elsewhere in government.

More generally, the review team believes that the Government should address itself to a strategy, based on the foundations of the White Paper, on how to handle the consequences of demography. Primary education has already been affected as enrolments have fallen, and the effects will move through other levels of the education system over the next ten to 15 years. Consideration must be given to the level of resources devoted to education, and to the distribution between different parts of the system. Of course the trend of demography may provide opportunities to reach some desired goals, for example the improvement of quality in the system, and reducing the level of drop-outs which would maintain student numbers at a higher level than would otherwise be the case. But the need for a strategic view is paramount, as also is the availability of a good and reliable system for monitoring numbers, costs and outputs throughout the system.

Monitoring the system

A major objective of the MoES in pursuing the reforms is to obtain a clear measure of progress. All those concerned with the system -- policymakers, teachers, parents, and other

stakeholders -- must be able to see how well the system is performing and how efficient it is. As will be clear from the discussion of earlier chapters, the review team is in complete sympathy with this objective. A transparent system of measuring outcomes is fundamental, not only in seeing what has happened but in enabling future targets or objectives to be set, and in helping justify an appropriate level of national expenditure on education and training. It must also be such as to influence behaviour by allowing those entering education or training and those already in the system to make better informed choices.

There is a good deal of knowledge about these areas in OECD and EU Member countries which possess a high level of statistical expertise. What Slovenia should have depends entirely on the country's own priorities, but a few observations may be made, drawing on international experience. Firstly, information which has to be specially collected is usually expensive, and burdensome on those who have to supply it. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the information will have significant value in use, and that this use is clear to and accepted by the information providers. Secondly, it follows from this that maximum use should be made of existing data. This may be administrative data (e.g. from the records of the public employment service) or it may be more sophisticated analysis of data from existing surveys: the EU Labour Force Survey is a very rich source of data which is extensively used by the OECD for its Employment Outlook. But thirdly, a good deal of information, including most monitoring and evaluation data, will have to be specially collected and this requires a prioritisation of what are the most important areas for action and a clear understanding of what is needed at the different levels -- at national level for policy assessment and formulation, and at regional or local level.

The review team believes that it is useful to think of a hierarchy of information about the performance of the education and training system. At the highest level some countries have national targets which express the objectives for improvement. These cover both foundation learning -- the performance of the primary and secondary education sectors -- and lifelong learning targets set in terms of the proportion of the workforce (or possibly of firms) reaching a particular standard. The school system in Slovenia is moving rapidly to measurement of performance which would allow the former type of standard to be formulated, but the lifelong targets require a national vocational qualification measure which Chapter 3 suggested was a priority. In the review team's opinion, national targets are highly desirable. They emphasise the significance to the nation of education and training; they involve, as they must, all the stakeholders in a co-operative effort; and they give a clear unambiguous measure of national progress.

One point of detail which is nonetheless important is how the national targets should be formulated. They must obviously be agreed to and accepted by all parts of the system, and responsibilities and future action to help meet the targets must also be agreed. In some countries targets have been expressed in terms of the position the country wants to reach at a point of time in the future, say 4 or 5 years ahead. This reflects the long timescale of most changes in the education system, but it may be difficult to devise effective action plans for the different parties. An alternative which is worth consideration is to have year-on-year rolling targets. These have the merit of being closer to the concerns of those in the system and they may be easier to disaggregate to lower levels.

Chapter 3 has discussed the vital importance of developing outcome indicators of the school system, and described how MoES and its associated bodies intend to take this forward. One question which may be briefly discussed here is the publication of the indicators. In some countries, "league tables" of schools are published showing how each school is placed relative to all others. This can have advantages, in that there is pressure on low achieving schools to improve, but also problems

since there may be unlike circumstances in different schools and league tables tend to polarise schools into good and bad. In Slovenia legislation would not currently allow publication of league tables. The results of the *matura* are made available, with each school -- and the pupils and parents -- receiving the results for the school, the national average, and the highest and lowest schools in the country. The review team considers that this is an effective way of giving necessary information to schools, teachers and parents. If at some stage, Slovenia decides to go further and publish league tables, there is a good deal of experience in OECD and EU countries on how the problems can be minimised.

For vocational and higher education the same kind of outcome-based performance measures are necessary. One important measure, though not the only one, is the success of students in finding employment or entering further training after completing their studies. This gives an indication of how well the study courses are geared to labour market needs, and can provide valuable guidance to students on their choice of course or institution. For such measures of performance to be effective in guiding choice they must be published as a regular series, without undue delay so that the information is up-to-date. It should be as disaggregated as possible, so that students have outcome data not only for each institution but also for particular courses or faculties. Only in this way can informed choices be made. This kind of information should of course also be of great value to educational administrators especially in vocational education and training. It would enable them to switch resources over time to courses which seemed to be more successful and cost-effective.

Recommendations

The Government should consider whether cross-departmental machinery should be established to secure a consistent approach across all departments to labour force development.

Existing work on labour market information, and vocational guidance, should be reinforced so that enterprises, individuals and Government can take decisions on the basis of soundly based and timely information.

The Government should review the effect of demographic trends in Slovenia on the future shape and structure of the education system, in the long-term and more immediately in particular, the effect on primary schools (especially in remote areas) and the policy and resource implications should be brought out clearly as a matter for Governmental consideration.

The MoES should consider whether the recent legislation on higher education is adequate for the universities to adjust their governance to the new situation facing Slovenia.

Current developments should aim at a transparent and outcome based system in which the outputs of all parts of the education system are subjected to regular measurement. There should be a hierarchy of measures, at national, regional and local and institutional level, which would contribute to a general appreciation of the effectiveness of the system and its value for money.

CHAPTER 7

TOWARDS STRATEGIC REFORM

This concluding chapter begins with the review team's key recommendations. These are drawn from the detailed recommendations in the individual chapters, and represent the review team's priorities. All of them concern work already in hand in the reform process, and the review team's intention is to emphasise the importance of these areas and to urge that current efforts be intensified.

Firstly, curriculum reform must be vigorously pursued, while maintaining a stable path of reform so as to avoid confusion and lack of understanding among the stakeholders, especially the teachers. In schools this means reducing the range of subjects covered by the *matura* examination and moving more rapidly away from "factology" towards learning and understanding. In the vocational areas of schools and post-secondary education, it means developing curricula, with other relevant stakeholders, which are more appropriate to the changing economic structure of Slovenia, and to the overriding need for a flexible and skilled workforce.

Secondly, the creation of a comprehensive system of outcome-related standards, across the whole educational system, is fundamental to securing the transparency and efficiency which is a major objective of the Slovenian reforms, and to the proper exercise of choice in the system. This may involve the development of new measurement instruments at some stage in the future, but the immediate priority is to get universal approval for the principle of outcome measurement, and the establishment of simple but authoritative instruments which can be refined as time goes on.

Thirdly, the decentralisation of decision-making must be pushed ahead, and with it an intensified involvement of the various stakeholders who have an interest in the operation and performance of the educational system. The review team has already observed that the consultative nature of the reform process has been one of its great strengths, but as reforms are implemented there is a need for stakeholders to become genuinely participants in the process. These points are perhaps particularly significant for vocational education, where decentralisation or regionalisation should help the system become more relevant to the labour markets it serves, and where fuller involvement of stakeholders -- especially the social partners -- is fundamentally important. The review team has suggested that new formal machinery at regional level could help in this.

Fourthly, there are some issues, discussed in earlier chapters, where a more coherent approach within government would pay dividends. These include the provision of economic and

labour market information and research, but perhaps the major one is the need to consider across government the implications of the falling Slovenian birth-rate on the educational system and more widely. There is a case for a broad strategic view across government in this area.

In conclusion, the review team presents some general reflections on the system as a whole, which the Slovenian Government may wish to consider, taking account of the fact that reform is not once-and-for-all. As the economy and society change so the education system will have to change as well. Certainly the degree of future change is unlikely to be as large a the current reforms, but the education system will have to be adaptable, flexible and quick to respond to new challenges. How this can be done is to some extent a function of the "innovation" system within education.

The nature of the system

The review team was struck by two aspects of the education system, from two points of view. First, there was a complicated network of bodies dealing with different aspects of reform, and it was not always clear what their respective responsibilities were; and secondly, the network of routes through which students might go, several of them very new, seemed confusing. Both these may be a function of the stage at which the reforms now are, as well as an outcome of the desire to have full involvement and ownership of change by people throughout the system. There is a great deal of work to do to bring the curriculum and the structure of the system up to date; full involvement of all the stakeholders may mean an unavoidably messy organisational structure; and full implementation of the principle of choice, in a situation where it is not clear what works and what does not, may justify a multiplicity of routes through the system. At the same time, a long-term aim of the reforms should be a simpler administrative structure with responsibilities clarified, and the product of outcome related standards and their measurement should be a simplification of the routes, to provide greater efficiency while retaining choice.

One issue that the Slovenian Government might wish to examine at some time in the future is whether the system could be made less "legislative". It is entirely understandable that in the first stages of reform a firm basis of new legislation is needed, and the approval of Parliament, as the pre-eminent democratic body in the country, gives the reforms full legitimacy. At the same time, there are areas of educational administration which are specified in Acts of Parliament in Slovenia which are handled in some other countries by ministerial administrative decisions. This is not a major issue and Slovenia is far from alone in its approach to these issues. But there may be a certain lack of flexibility if decisions have to wait for legislative opportunities in an inevitably crowded parliamentary timetable.

Parental and stakeholder involvement

In a democratic education system parents must play an important part by having a voice in planning and decision procedures concerning their children's life in school. In Slovenia, through the school councils, parents are having a greater say in how schools are organised, but as in many OECD countries parental involvement is still not strong. This is not surprising given the very recent move from a controlled system where parents could not have had a voice even if they had wanted to the new democracy. One of the priorities of the MoES is to encourage and deepen parental involvement and the review team agrees that this is very important. Obviously, their children's education ought to be of vital interest to parents, the increasing number of options within the school curriculum and the prospect of greater streaming will face children with new choices which will require a high degree of

parental interest. In addition, the likelihood of a greater differentiation between schools and a closer relationship between schools and their local communities will again call for fuller participation by parents. And this in turn will require more information about the school and education systems, and improvements in the transparency of the structure.

More generally, the review team feels that determined attempts must be made to extend and deepen the involvement of all stakeholders. The right players are on the stage but they have not in some cases fully understood the nature of the part they are supposed to play. This may partly be a matter of organisation in that a stakeholder is not properly involved in the relevant part of the system; or, more likely, of resources in that the role they are supposed to play cannot be performed in view of other calls on their time and personnel; or it may be that they do not understand the role they should be playing and therefore are underperforming. It is vital that the reforms are pursued with the consent, involvement and understanding of the stakeholders, and that current work to extend knowledge of the reform process and the roles of the various participants, through capacity building, publicity, funding school councils and so on, be vigorously pursued.

This point can be developed by thinking of the nature of system and reform in the longer term. Slovenia has had to pack into a very short period reforms which in other circumstances might have stretched over two or more decades, and has done so with remarkable success. But it is clear that in Slovenia, as in all countries, the educational system will be subject to progressive and continuous change, at times radical and at times minor alterations. Countries which cope best with this will be those which have the various elements of the system in a clearly understood structure which will support and facilitate innovation.

This "innovation system" can be seen as containing four elements: policy development, basic and applied research, the producers of innovations, and the end-users, teachers and others within the educational system. Policy development in Slovenia is in the hands of the MoES, and as this report makes clear, the process has worked well, with the White Paper spelling out the values and principles and with an open and public debate.

Research is more problematical. In many countries there is a gap between basic and applied research, so that educational research may not be applicable to the concerns and the work of teachers and schools. In Slovenia, there should be a strategy for research into the reforms and the changes which have occurred, so as to help the MoES and others understand the degree to which the proposed changes have in fact occurred in educational institutions, and to point the way to future developments.

The sources of educational innovation are widespread. In Slovenia many ideas which are later implemented as innovations come from the development centres and councils which have been set up as part of the reforms. But many practical and concrete ideas come from practitioners who take an innovative approach to their work. To work effectively and to ensure that innovations are disseminated throughout the system, there has to be effective communication and networking around the system and the study groups of teachers which have been set up will facilitate this. This kind of information exchange network is not easy to bring about as many countries have found, but it is essential that such an infrastructure be created and be made to work through bringing together policy makers, researchers and users in a common effort to speed the process of reform through innovation.

Key in all this, of course, are the teachers within the system. How they behave depends among other things on the culture of the institution, level of professional competence, motivation and management styles. The development networks mentioned above would help communication

between teachers and the other parties within the system which, in Slovenia as in other countries, is as not as close as it should be, and it would also facilitate communication within the profession. The training available for principals and the wide range of in-service training for teachers should enable greater familiarity with current policy issues, research trends and the reform process in general. Participants in other sectors than schools would also benefit from this kind of opportunity, as demonstrating the interconnected nature of the elements in the system, and the importance of improving the dialogue between the different parties.